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DANTE AND AQUINAS

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DANTE & AQUINAS

BY

PHILIP H. WICKSTEED

BEING THE SUBSTANCE
OF THE JOWETT LECTURES OF 1911

Joachim Kahl O.P.

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MENTE HUMILLIMA OBTULI

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PREFACE

The student of the great age of mediæval theology is singularly fortunate in having two such guides as S. Thomas Aquinas and Dante Alleghieri. The first is a theologian, a philosopher, and, above all, an ecclesiastic. The other is a poet, a prophet, and, above all, a layman.

The German Dantist Karl Vossler claims Dante as the most perfect representative of Christianity that history can point to on the very ground that he was neither a recluse nor a professional theologian, but a man of affairs, who lived the full life of his age and found in his Christian faith and his spiritual passion the very centre of its significance.

I think it may be said without undue sacrifice to the love of antithesis that Aquinas regards the whole range of human experiences and activities as the collecting ground for illustrations of Christian truth, and Dante regards Christian truth as the interpreting and inspiring force that makes all human life live.

The poem to which "both heaven and earth have set their hand" is at once secular and sacred; and it is both the one and the other in the best sense and in fullest measure. It is, in no small measure, this vivid retention of earthly interests

under the light of spiritual perceptions, and the consistently psychological and experiential interpretation of a sacramental and traditional religion, that gives its originality and intensity to the *Commedia*.

The purpose of this book is, in the first instance, to bring out this special significance of Dante's work by helping to throw out its distinctive features against the background of the accepted and authoritative exposition of the received philosophy and theology of his time, while at the same time enriching his utterances by relating them to the implications and presuppositions on which they are grounded. But I trust that the sketch of the scholastic philosophy, and especially of the teaching of Aquinas, necessarily subordinate as it is, may have some independent value, and may be found useful to many whose interest, or at the lowest curiosity, has been roused in relation to mediæval philosophy, and who do not know where to turn for a disinterested and popular treatment of the subject free from all propagandist or polemical intention.

The reader will at once perceive that the uneven stress upon different aspects of the subject, the numerous and important omissions, and, in general, the principles upon which one point has been taken and another left, are largely personal; but the abundance or paucity of citations in the appendices to some of the chapters is often determined by

the extent to which the points to be illustrated are likely to be disputed or misconceived. Points of equal importance are often unsupported by special references or citations because the passages in Aquinas dealing with them could easily be found by any student, and the conclusions are not likely to raise any doubt.

I have further to add that on some of the ground rapidly traversed in the early chapters of this book I am but a casual traveller, and it should be understood that when references to other than the original sources are given it implies, in various degrees, not only indebtedness, but dependence upon the secondary authorities cited.

Finally, I have to express my high appreciation of the honour done to me by the Committee of the Jowett Lectureship in inviting me to deliver, at the Passmore Edwards Settlement, the lectures upon which this book is based. The matter has been recast, and perhaps few traces of the lecture form remain, but it is the substance of the lectures which is now issued in book form.

P. H. W.

CHILDREY, *February* 1913.

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DANTE AND AQUINAS

CHAPTER I

MEDIÆVAL THOUGHT AND GREEK PHILOSOPHY

THE student of Dante who has firmly grasped the conceptions of form and matter (or material) has, for his immediate purpose, "captured the very citadel of philosophy." Till then he "sees men as trees walking." And in clearing his vision and securing the desired position of command he will find no more potent ally than S. Thomas Aquinas. But Form and Matter are technical terms of Aristotelian philosophy, and so for the key to Dante and Aquinas we must go to Aristotle. Nor is this the whole of the story, for Aristotle himself wrote under the direct influence of Plato and formulated his philosophy with direct reference to Plato's teaching; and again, though Dante and Thomas were Aristotelians in their technical language and in their method, yet the subject-matter on which they work is deeply imbued with Platonism. To understand Dante and Aquinas, therefore, we must have some acquaintance with the thought of Plato as well as with that of Aristotle. And again, to understand the clash of these

two great minds of Greece we must understand the philosophical problems which both inherited from their predecessors. Thus to understand Dante and Aquinas the student must acquire some elementary knowledge, at least, of the progress of Greek thought from its earliest formal and systematic beginnings.

In this chapter we shall simplify the task now indicated by concentrating our attention on the single problem of the relation of the permanent to the transient, of the abiding to the changing, of underlying identity to superficial diversity, which will bring us most directly to the Aristotelian doctrine of *form* and *matter*, which is our immediate goal. In the next following chapters we shall briefly follow the later developments of Platonism (under Aristotelian and other reactions) which issued in Neoplatonism, and shall touch on the way in which the most significant doctrines of Neoplatonism were carried into the heart of Christian theology and religion; and shall also follow the migrations and transformations of Aristotelianism in like manner. We shall then be in a position to approach the direct study of Scholasticism.

Historians are agreed in taking Thales (*fl. c.* 600 B.C.) as the starting-point in the history of Greek philosophy. His significance is to be found in the fact that he dealt with the problem of the

origin of things, which primitive man treats mythologically, on a purely physical basis from which all anthropomorphic ideas had been exorcised. We have no details of his system or of the arguments by which he supported it, but his main tenet was that water is the generalised or ultimate form of all matter. In modern language we might perhaps say that he believed all things to be allotropic forms of water, just as diamond and plumbago are allotropic forms of carbon; which means that a diamond, for instance, while possessing different physical properties from ordinary carbon, may nevertheless be reduced to it by processes that involve neither the addition nor subtraction of any other matter from it; or that if diamond, carbon, or plumbago can be brought into combination with any other element, the resultant compounds are in all respects identical. Or again, since the conception of water and the conception of liquid were not at this time clearly differentiated, one might think of Thales as feeling his way towards the thought that fluidity rather than solidity is the normal form of matter, under which it is most helpful to conceive it in its ultimate reality; but this suggestion cannot be pushed very far without too obvious foisting of modern ideas upon a more primitive stage of speculation.

Various conjectures have been made as to the grounds on which Thales based his opinion; as, for instance, that food in the process of being

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transformed from the tissues of one organism to those of another is reduced to a liquid pulp. Or that the visible growth of plants out of the earth, after rain, naturally suggests that water is their ultimate constituent. Yet other suggestions are made by Aristotle; but the essentially significant thing is to note that Thales had firmly grasped the idea that in all transformations of nature we are not to note change only, but are to understand that there must also be something that is changed; and are to realise the permanence and identity of this underlying something, amid the transience and variety of its visible or tangible attributes. Thus reasoning and observation can get at an identity where the senses only reveal diversity.

It matters little whether, with Thales, we regard water as the common form to which all else can be reduced, or give the preference, with Anaximenes (*fl. c.* 550 B.C.), to air (gaseous form), or assume, with the deeper insight of the somewhat earlier Anaximander, that we should think of the underlying substrate as the undifferentiated matrix of all the elements; for the essential step in the progress of thought is to recognise that, whenever one thing changes into another, there must be a something that changes; that is to say, something that was one thing and is another, a something therefore that abides as well as a something that passes, a something that retains its identity while changing its appearance and manifestations; and

that the senses, therefore, however true their evidence may be, do not tell us the whole tale. Our reason must go deeper, and must find something that to them is inaccessible.

The reader will do well to note that we have already insensibly dropped into the use of the word " form " to designate the characteristics that distinguish, for example, air from water; so that in the system of Anaximander we might already say that an undefined and undifferentiated " matter," of which we can give no account, may take the *form* of earth, air, or water. The *form* of air will then mean the essential qualities that differentiate it from water and all other substances. We might, therefore, already anticipate the Aristotelian and Scholastic phraseology by saying that water (or any other substance) consists of " matter " and " form," and that in water and air the " matter " is identical but the " form " different.

The philosophers we have hitherto mentioned were all natives of Miletus; that is to say, they were Ionian Greeks of Asia Minor. And so was Xenophanes of Colophon (born *c.* 575 B.C.); but after the descent of the Medes and Persians upon Ionia (546 B.C.) he became a wanderer over the whole Hellenic world; and the chief seat of his permanent influence was Elĕa (the Latin Velia) in Southern Italy. Resisting the strong temptation to dwell on the fascinating personality and many-sided

genius of this wandering minstrel, who lived to extreme old age, we may note the bold iconoclasm with which he attacked the two idolatries of Hellas —the worship of athletics and the worship of Homer. Homer's representations of the gods were to him sheer blasphemy. Homer and Hesiod attributed to the gods everything that was disgraceful and blameworthy in men—theft, adultery, and deception. Xenophanes himself elaborated a lofty monotheism. "If oxen, or horses, or lions, had hands and could paint and accomplish the works of men, horses would represent the gods like horses, and oxen like oxen, and would make them of the same shape they had themselves." But we are to think of the "one God, greatest amongst gods and men," as unlike to men either in body or in thought, as seeing and hearing in the whole integrity of his being, not with an organ of sight, like the eye, or an organ of hearing, like the ear. It is not fitting to think of the Deity as bustling about from one place to another, for he ever abides stable, and "sways all things with the act of mind, effortless."[1] Xenophanes relates himself to the school of Miletus by declaring that "all things come from the earth, and all return to her at last," or elsewhere that "all things that come into existence and grow are earth and water." But what we have particularly to note in him is the

[1] Cf. the mediæval angelology, and Dante's ode "Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete."

appearance of a new line of development in thought, based not upon scientific observation (though he was a great observer also, and had based a theory of evolution on his observations of fossils in geological deposits), but upon reflection on the inherent implications or incompatibilities of our own ideas. The current conceptions of Deity were inconsistent and self-destructive, and by purging their higher elements of all incongruous and detrimental survivals we might reach higher conceptions of truth. There is no evidence that Xenophanes consciously formulated this principle, but it is very evident that he was working on it. He had full confidence in the validity of intuitions, and in the correspondence of reality to them. In this respect he anticipates Plato and the Platonic School; and in his sense of the inadequacy of all the analogies drawn from the sensible world to describe the Supreme, he anticipates Neoplatonism and the Neoplatonic doctrine (subsequently adopted in its full extent by Christian thinkers [1]) that it is safer to describe God negatively than positively. Thus he declared in particular that God must be thought of "neither as moving nor as stationary."

When we ask how these conceptions of Xenophanes bore on the problem of the abiding and changing, we see at once that, so far as the Deity himself is concerned, change has no meaning. Xenophanes might have used the very phrase of

[1] Cf. pp. 35 *sqq*.

the Epistle of James, "with whom there is no variation, neither shadow cast by turning." Whatever else changes the Supreme abides. But what does this include? How far was Xenophanes a pantheist? How far did he identify the self-poised and self-sufficing Deity with the whole sum of things? The surviving fragments of his writings do not enable us to answer the question. But there is no doubt as to the teaching of his disciple Parmenides of Elea (*fl.* 500 B.C.). He applied the thought of Xenophanes, that God is unchanging, to the whole universe, and boldly declared, on metaphysical principles, that there can be no such thing as change at all. It was generally admitted that nothing could come out of nothing. Parmenides insisted on this principle, and declared that between being and non-being there could be no compromise or middle term, and from one to the other there could be no transition. That which is, is, and cannot not be. That which is not, is not, and cannot be. The whole conception of "becoming" rises out of an illogical and self-contradictory attempt to mix up being and non-being. One may conjecture that he argued: "If nothing can come out of nothing and so *become*, it must follow that nothing can come out of anything; for if it is not there already it might as easily come from nothing as from where it is not." In any case Parmenides, with the characteristic audacity of the Greek intellect, and confidence in its pro-

cesses, declared that because there cannot be such a thing as change, there is not. The appearance of change is a mere illusion.

We have now reached a further development. The Ionians had given us a contrast between the permanent and the transient, the abiding unity and the changing diversity, the object of intelligence and the object of sense, which seemed already to suggest the higher reality of the permanent underlying identity, as against the transient superficial diversity. But the approach from the metaphysical side has indefinitely sharpened this last contrast, and, to Parmenides, the one unchanging reality accessible to the intellect alone is definitely true; and the manifold and fluctuating appearances cognisable by the senses are definitely false and illusory. Now it is easy to find formulæ in which the two systems (natural and metaphysical) appear to coalesce, or at least to slide imperceptibly into each other; but the fact remains that they represent two sharply opposed methods, the one of which finds its point of departure in the concrete data of the senses, the other in the abstract data of the mind. Each reasons on the relation of the one to the many: both alike work by reflection, analysis, and construction: both alike recognise that the intelligence can carry you below and behind the data of sense: both study likeness in the unlike and unity amid diversity.

But the one derives its ultimate data from material impressions furnished by the senses, the other from immaterial conceptions discovered in the mind. They differ fundamentally, therefore, in their estimate of the relative validity of these two modes of access to the truth; and Zeno of Elea[1] (*fl. c.* 540), the disciple of Parmenides, carried the warfare into the heart of the enemy's country by attempting to show that time, space, and motion themselves, the very elements in which change works, are intellectually self-contradictory and self-destructive, and are therefore merely illusory and irrational appearances, due to the senses, which vanish at the touch of intelligence. This he did by the series of paradoxes of which "Achilles and the Tortoise" is the best known.

We need not follow the Ionian School of physicists any further. Even the stock contrast between Parmenides and Heracleitus (*fl. c.* 500), with his preference for fire as the representative form of matter and his insistence on the perpetual flux of all things, must not delay us. Nor must Empedocles (*fl. c.* 450), with his recognition of the four elements—earth, water, fire, and air—as having equal rights, no one of them being able to claim priority; and his assertion of the great forces of "attraction" and "repulsion" or "love" and "hate"[2] as organic principles of nature. Nor

[1] So called in distinction from the later Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoics.

[2] Cf. *Inf.* xii. 42.

must Lucippus and Democritus[1] (*fl. c.* 430) with their atomic doctrine.[2]

A few lines, however, must be devoted to Socrates, who brought philosophy to bear on the problems of human conduct. Fundamentally all philosophy is a tracing of likeness amid diversity; that is to say, it makes generalisations and draws distinctions. Socrates generalised and distinguished not in the physical but in the moral world. He sought out the common underlying conception of justice, for example, or beauty, which makes us apply the same term "beautiful" to so many unlike things, or makes one man call a thing "just" while another calls the very same thing "unjust," though perhaps they both have the same general idea of what justice means. It will be seen that though his line of inquiry is very different from that of the Eleatic School, nevertheless Socrates allies himself with the Eleatics in his attempt to get at truth by examining ideas and clearing them from obscurities. He was a keen observer, on his own ground, but his fundamental assumption is that by examining what we mean by the words we use, and what is involved in the consistent application of them, when purged of alien and incongruous

[1] Cf. *Inf.* iv. 136.

[2] Thales, Heracleitus, and Zeno are also mentioned, but with no characteristics, in *Inf.* iv., 137, 138. The best edition of the fragments of these and other Presocratic philosophers is *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker Griechisch und Deutsch*, von Hermann Diels, vol. i. 2nd ed. Berlin, 1906.

elements, we can arrive at the permanent realities of the moral world.

For our special and limited purpose we have now sufficient material for understanding the problem which faced Plato (427-347 B.C.). His philosophic activity may be regarded as a persistent attempt, renewed again and again, to overcome the absolute severance of the non-existent from the existent, which Parmenides had asserted, by establishing a relation between becoming and being, between the apparent and the real, between multiplicity and unity. Accepting the belief that no true knowledge can be based on the perpetual flux of the phenomenal world, he strove not only to get behind transient phenomena to permanent realities, but also to give at least some relative intelligibility to the phenomenal world itself by somehow relating it to that world of absolute existence to which the intelligence gives us access.

It was deeply implanted in Plato's mind that as you approach unity and permanence you approach alike the good, the true and the real. A common noun, then, which includes a vast number of individuals, represents something at once more real and better than any of the individuals which it embraces. Justice is something more real than the fleetingly and imperfectly just acts which man can perform. A beautiful woman, a beautiful mathematical demonstration, or a beautiful poem catch some flash only of the central and absolute

Beauty. In a word, the things to which we have direct access by the senses, or which we can directly experience in individual and concrete shape, only have a meaning, or indeed a title to the very names by which we know them, in virtue of their reflecting, in some imperfect and partial way, a reality which is at once better and more unified than themselves. Plato's celebrated doctrine of " kinds " or " ideas " embodies his conviction that every concrete individual or thing has a character of illusoriness or mere semblance; and that it is not till you get behind the individual to the " kind " or " idea " that you approach the absolutely existent and hold converse with the unchanging things accessible to the intelligence alone.

Once grant the existence of a world of immaterial ideas, which are permanent, unchanging, real, and true, and it is not difficult to see how the whole of the changing and illusory phenomenal world may be regarded as deriving whatever significance and qualified reality it may be supposed to have from its imperfect reflection of these ideas; and also how it may be possible for the mind to make educational use of the fluctuating illusions among which it is placed. For however it came there, whether by recollection from a previous existence, or however else, the mind of man is as a fact capable of recognising these fleeting and imperfect resemblances to reality, and of tracing by their means its way (shall we say its way " back "?) to

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the world of realities. The philosopher, who is taunted by the ignorant populace with being unpractical, is the only really practical man; for to him alone is there any reason, order, or related system at all in the world of experience or phenomena in which we move. Yet because the philosopher is steering his course by abiding realities and sees some meaning at least in what he experiences and what he does, he is denounced as an unpractical dreamer, just as the pilot was thrown overboard by the indignant sailors because he was gazing at the stars instead of minding the ship.

So far all is clear enough, but if we attempt to explain the existence of this concrete and illusory world we are at a standstill. How does it come to be, and how do the real "ideas" account for the unreal phenomena? We can only take refuge in such phrases as that the phenomenal world represents a perpetual yearning of the non-existent to exist, of the unreal to become real, of the illusory to become true, of the manifold to become one. Here Plato the philosopher passes into Plato the poet and mystic. We are forced to admit that, as a thinker, he never accomplishes his task of making a bridge over the Parmenidean chasm between the non-existent and the existent.[1]

When we pass to Aristotle the centre of gravity

[1] I owe much to Windelband's *Platon* in Frommann's *Klassiker der Philosophie*, 4th ed. Stuttgart, 1905.

shifts from the tradition of Parmenides to the tradition of the Ionians. We have to deal with the same problem of relating the particular to the general, and still have to ask ourselves: "If knowledge must be of the permanent and unchanging, and if, on the other hand, all to which we have direct access changes from moment to moment, how can we ever arrive at any knowledge at all?" It would seem that we can never know anything to which we have access, and can never have access to anything which we could know. But Aristotle solves the problem by the merest exercise of common sense. Taking his starting-point from the experienced facts, alike of the outer and the inner world, he notes that while the mind has nothing to work on except what is supplied to it by the senses, it nevertheless is not compelled to be satisfied with those data just as they are: for it has the power of regarding any concrete object or experience under whatever aspect or from whatever point of view it chooses, and dropping all else out of consideration. Things that are unlike in some respects need not be unlike in all, and the mind has the power of resolving the concrete impression of an individual thing into all its components and thinking of only one of them at a time. If a thing is white, or square, or heavy, or alive, or fourfooted, or oviparous, we can think of this special characteristic and drop out of our minds all else. And each special object will share any such given

characteristic with many others that may be more or less unlike it in other respects. This process of separating or *drawing out* some quality or characteristic of an object and contemplating it in itself is the power of "abstraction," and Aristotle recognised it as the faculty by which we trace likeness amid diversity, pass from the concrete to the abstract, from the particular to the general, from the many to the one. Now such general conceptions as we can form in this way are not entities that exist apart, they are characteristics that exist in the things they characterise, and these things are transient, so that their characteristics have no permanent seat; yet they always exist somewhere, for there is a perpetual succession of things; so that although abstract qualities and characteristics have no permanent home they are never homeless, and though they have no separate and independent existence of their own they never cease to exist. Thus they have a certain permanence, as have also the relations that exist between them, though such relations only exist in concrete objects, and no concrete objects are permanent. To take a mathematical example. There is no such thing as length apart from long things. Nor is there any long thing which is not also broad and deep. But we can consider two objects simply from the point of view of their length, and declare one to be longer or shorter than the other, irrespective of all their other attributes. Thus we have abstracted

the conception of length, and can learn how one length relation is involved in another. On these abstractions we can erect a geometry of the line, which has permanent and unchanging validity and reality, although length nowhere exists except in long things, and long things are always something else besides long, and are always changing. In like manner triangularity only exists in triangles, and every triangle is either acute-angled, or obtuse-angled, or right-angled, and every triangle must have a definite size; but we can think of those properties of a triangle which are independent of its size and special shape and can establish a series of relations that are to be traced in all triangles, whatever their size or shape, such, for example, as that the side opposite the greater angle is the longer, or that all the angles are equal to an angle of continuity. And though the general exists nowhere except in the particular, yet by considering it in the abstract we may reach conclusions which actual things can never be made directly to illustrate, such, for instance, as the indefinite divisibility of a line.

In the same way we may take a number of men, and may note the points in which they resemble each other, and so arrive at an abstract conception of manhood which is permanently true of all men, though none of the men of whom it is true are permanent. There is no need to imagine that the "absolute man" exists somewhere. Manhood

exists everywhere in men, but nowhere except in men; and in each man it exists in combination with a great deal else besides manhood.

Now for such general conceptions as that of manhood, or triangular shape, or any other abstraction that exists in a number of concrete things but nowhere by itself, Aristotle usually adopts the same word that Plato had used for his self-existing realities, namely "kind" or "kinds." But just as Plato, in addition to this term which he shares with Aristotle, had a synonym which is peculiar to himself, namely "idea," so Aristotle too has his own special synonym, namely "form." And in expounding the doctrines of the two philosophers it has, very naturally, been usual to avoid the term "kind" common to them both, and to adopt for each the synonymous term characteristic of himself. Thus we speak of Platonic "ideas" and Aristotelian "forms." It is a practice which has an undoubted convenience and is conducive to clearness from one point of view, but it has the great disadvantage of always suggesting the difference between the two thinkers and never their common ground, and also of severing the technical language of both of them from the common matrix of natural, and naturally significant, phraseology out of which it grows and with which it always remains in connection.

It is easy, however, to discern this common ground. "Idea" and "form" are mere variants

on " kind." And Plato and Aristotle both investigate such problems as these: What is meant by saying that Socrates and Sophroniscus are both " men "? What does it really tell you of them? What does it enable you to understand? When you ask " what " a thing is and get your answer:— It is a cart, a horse, a tree—what really is that " whatness " or " thatness " that makes it the thing it is and not some other thing? And why can you never give any explanation of a thing except by determining some " kind " or " kinds " which it is or to which it belongs? But Plato is always trying to get at something *behind* the concrete and Aristotle to get at something *in* it. The Platonic " kinds " or *ideas* exist apart from individual things and are the perfect prototypes of which they are the imperfect imitations or reflections; the Aristotelian " kinds " or *forms* are abstractions of the human mind that have no actual existence except in transient and concrete individuals. It will easily be seen that as Plato is looking for something absolute and Aristotle for something relative, Aristotle's *forms* may be at once more definite and less rigid than Plato's *ideas*. More definite because we may know exactly what we are talking about, and less rigid because we may talk and think of a man as a man at one moment and as an animal at another, and there is no reason why we should not regard him as belonging to one class and having one set of characteristics at one time and as belonging

to another (larger or smaller) group with another (more general or more particular) set of characteristics at another. For we can look at the same object under any one of a hundred aspects, each of which may throw it into some one of a hundred different groups. And, seeing that the *form* is that which makes it a member of the group under consideration at the moment, its *form* will differ according to the connection in which we are considering it. But it is always its *form* that makes it what it is, in the sense of giving it a right to claim the group-name of animal, lion, man, body, or whatever it may be. No doubt the group arrangement and classification of things must attempt to conform itself to natural divisions and distinctions. It must not be arbitrary or capricious if it is to be useful or sensible, and this tends to give a certain fixity to the conception of *form;* but in itself it is perfectly plastic.[1]

We have now a provisional conception of the meaning of the word "form" and its relation to "idea" and "kind"; but to reach an equivalent

[1] It will be useful to insert here an observation as to Aristotle's use of the two terms "kind" (*εἶδος*) and "form" (*μορφή*). I have spoken of them as synonymous, and so they are in the sense that "kind" (*εἶδος*) can always be substituted for "form" (*μορφή*). But the inverse is not true; for *εἶδος* may mean either the group-characteristics (triangularity, animality), or the group itself (the triangle-kind or the animal-group), whereas *μορφή* is only used in the former sense. So *εἶδος* may but *μορφή* must mean the characteristics that determine the group, whereas *εἶδος* can but *μορφή* cannot be used for the group itself that they determine.

provisional conception of "matter" we must examine another aspect of the Aristotelian philosophy. Aristotle was not checked by the impassable gulf which Parmenides proclaimed between being and non-being and which he supposed to render all "becoming" impossible. It is true that the speculations of Parmenides interested and perhaps amused Aristotle not a little, and he devotes much hard logic-chopping and logomachy to the refutation of the fundamental Parmenidean thesis of the all-embracing and undifferentiated unity of Being; but as a real perplexity the impossibility of "becoming" evidently did not seriously trouble him in his actual thinking. The robustness of his common sense and the frankness of his acceptance of experience were enough to insure his recognition of the fact of "becoming" as a basal and essential part of experience. And he is never weary of insisting that a thing may be potentially (*δυνάμει*) something which it is not yet actually (*ἐνεργείᾳ*), but which it may actually become. An acorn is potentially an oak-tree, but it is not one actually until it is really functioning as such, that is to say, actually doing and being all that we mean by calling it an oak-tree. A child in an elementary school may be potentially a great philologian, but he is not one actually until he has developed the faculties and acquired the information which are implied when we call a man a philologian. And moreover there are degrees in this

process of actualising. The developed scholarship of the educated philologian exists in actuality as compared with the undeveloped potentialities of his child-mind; but if he is playing or sleeping, his philological faculties themselves are for the time being potentialities only, as compared with their actuality or energising at the moments when he is really engaged in philological research or contemplation. This distinction between potential and actual permeates Aristotle's thought. When a thing has actually become that which it was meant to be, the functioning or actuality which it has reached is called its " entelechy," which means its " being-at-its-goal-ness."

It is clear that " entelechy," " actuality," and " form " are closely related conceptions. They can very often be used for each other, and are, as a fact, frequently interchanged, but we cannot quite leave the matter there. If Aristotle thought of air as changing into water he would think of the air-form not as changing into the water-form, but as superseded by it; whereas the underlying material or ultimate " matter " that once had the air-form now has the water-form. If we were to say that air is potentially water we should not be using strictly Aristotelian language, for it is the *matter* which now has the air-form that we must think of as actually air but potentially water, because it has the potentiality of being stripped of the air-form and clothed with the water-form. But to be

air is no more the entelechy of matter than to be water. The air-form then is, in this case, the actuality of air, and the form of matter, but not the entelechy of anything in particular. On the other hand we may say that an acorn is itself potentially an oak-tree, and that it may gradually assume the oak-tree-form. Moreover an oak-tree is what it is meant to be. If it remains an acorn or is dissolved into its elements it never reaches its goal. The oak-tree-form, therefore, is not only the *actuality* of the oak-tree but the *entelechy* of the acorn, and the *form* of the matter of which the oak-tree is made.

But how are we to conceive of this "matter"? Ultimately all matter may be regarded as one. Air and water are matter with a few simple differentiating properties. The air-properties and water-properties, in their respective collectivity, are forms in which air and water differ, but the underlying matter is common to them both. If several elements combine into metals or other complex substances or bodies, you may, if you like, regard the elements as the material and the fresh characteristics now developed as the form.[1] But you may equally well regard the underlying matter common to all the elements as the material, and *all* the characteristics of the new creature as its form, including its lightness or gravity, its moist-

[1] Again, you may regard a genus, such as "animal," as the material and may regard the differentiating characteristics of the mammal, for example, as constituting a "kind" within it.

ness or dryness, its tenuity or density, and its hotness or coldness, though these already characterised the elements out of which it was composed. Matter or material, then, has the same kind of relativity that form has. All that is not form is material, and what you assign to each depends simply upon where you choose to start with your characterisation, and what you choose to assume as already there when you begin. But if you choose to assign *all* the characteristics to the form and to assume nothing but the original material underlying all the elements, the ultimate " matter " in fact, then you must remember that you are dealing with a mere creation (or at any rate a mere postulate) of the mind, that never has been and never can be observed or detected in any way. It is just as much an abstraction as form is. As to this Aristotle never wavers. Form, and matter in the ultimate sense, are both of them mental abstractions. They exist in actual things, but they do not exist apart, by and in themselves. What actually exist are concrete things and substances, and we must always keep our feet firmly planted upon them as the undeniable realities from which all abstractions, deductions, and inferences must start.[1]

[1] To avoid misconception, we must put in the caveat at once that facts about consciousness, such, for example, as the existence of the faculty of sensation in animals and of the power of abstraction in man, are as well and firmly based on the observation of concrete beings as are the facts that some things are heavy and others hard. Cf. pp. 154 *sqq.*

We shall return repeatedly to Aristotle; but we have already seen enough to explain, and in a measure at least to justify, the popular and traditional conception of the characteristics of Platonism and Aristotelianism. And this popular conception will serve our present turn without being submitted to too curious a questioning. Platonism we can take as being at heart an unshaken confidence in the ultimate validity of ideas, with a tendency to suspect the data of the senses, and to insist on the unreality of the phenomenal; and Aristotelianism as a guarded reliance on the senses, making them check and criticise each other's evidence, and an absolute acceptance of the phenomenal as furnishing the prime realities from which all else must be derived, and upon which all else must be based. Abstractions have only a secondary reality, but at the same time it is they that give us access to the only material of real and systematic knowledge. They exist nowhere apart, but they exist everywhere *in* the concrete, and it is only by following their guide that we can systematise, relate, or understand either the material or the moral and spiritual world in which we live. For, after all, though our data—the *things given* us—come through the senses, *we to whom they are given* are spiritual and not material; or, to express it in what we shall presently see are the ultimate terms, we are mind and not matter.

But from this first sketch all reference to psycho-

logy, to the doctrine of the soul, and to the contrast between the knowing and the known has been intentionally excluded; we shall touch on it in a later chapter, and may here close our provisional statement of Platonic and Aristotelian doctrine.[1]

[1] Cf. chapters iii. and vi.

CHAPTER II

NEOPLATONISM AND THE CHRISTIAN NEOPLATONISTS

PLATONISM and Aristotelianism both went through diverse adventures and transformations in the course of the centuries, and their fates after the deaths of their founders are of special interest and importance to us.

We will begin with Platonism, for though Plato's own works, with the important exception of the *Timaeus*, which was translated and paraphrased probably in the fourth century A.D., were unknown in the west throughout the Middle Ages, yet his direct influence on the Greek Fathers had been very great, and it was indirectly transmitted to the Latin Fathers also. Moreover, the later developments of Platonic doctrine in the Neoplatonic schools, taking place side by side with the parallel development of Christian doctrine, reacted powerfully upon it. Thus Platonism and Neoplatonism had been formative powers in the shaping of Christian philosophy, theology, and religion for nearly twelve centuries before the great inrush of Aristotelian influence created the system under which Dante and Aquinas lived.

Our immediate task in this chapter is to sketch

the Neoplatonism of Plotinus (third century), of the pseudo Dionysius-Areopagita (fifth century?), and of Scotus Eriugena (ninth century).

In Plato's ideal republic family life and private property are only allowed to the lowest or trading classes of society. Community of women, of children, and of property is the renunciation demanded of the guardians of the common weal, who have overcome the illusions of appetite and ambition, and live among realities. How far these conceptions (reluctantly abandoned in Plato's latest work, the "Laws") are to be regarded as having merely symbolic significance is a question which will perhaps never be decided. But, at any rate, this suppression of the family and individual life symbolises Plato's ideal of a life for and by true doctrine, and is an anticipation of the mediæval idea of life for the Church alone. Plato was himself one of the most perfect artists the world has ever seen, and was keenly susceptible to every form of beauty. Yet in theory he will allow art no place at all in society, except so far as it can be made either a training in virtue or an instrument for the discovery of truth. According to Windelband, Plato, while he assimilates the whole treasure of Greek thought and feeling, is himself fundamentally un-Greek, in that the deepest note in his nature is a cry for deliverance. His ideal of society rests on a community of thought and aspiration, containing in germ, and more than germ, the whole

conception of a church, with its splendid and terrible possibilities of spiritual life and spiritual tyranny. The Academy held in its womb Neoplatonism and mediæval Christianity.[1]

It was some five hundred years after Plato's death that the Neoplatonic School, of which Plotinus (*c.* 205-279 A.D.) was the chief exponent, flourished. Aristotle's systematising thought and precise terminology could not fail to influence all subsequent thinking, even when it was on most pronouncedly Platonic lines. Hence, when the Neoplatonists revived and modified Plato's teaching, they often used Aristotelian language, and even conceived their problems in Aristotelian form, so that Erdmann has said that they might as well have been called Neo-Aristotelians as Neo-Platonists. But this is not so. In the main essentials of their system they were Platonists and not Aristotelians, for they pushed the Platonic principles to their furthest consequences—or beyond them; whereas the central principles of Aristotelianism, as distinct from its formal methods and terminology, never really took hold of them.

The prevailing impression left on the mind by the works of Plotinus is that of a religious rather than a philosophical system, and of a mystic rather than a rationalistic approach to reality. Plotinus is, if possible, ultra-Platonic and ultra-Parmenidean

[1] This is little else than a paraphrase of the concluding passages of Windelband's *Platon*. See above, p. 14, *note*.

in his assertion of the absolute unity of existence. His Absolute, or πρῶτος θεός, corresponding to the Platonic "one," or "good," cannot even be asserted to be, for that already implies a limitation. And if we must attempt any expression of it at all, we must speak of it not as Being but as Super-being. The safer way of approaching it is not by the positive method of striving to include everything, but by the negative method of striving to remove all limitations and qualifications. The Absolute is neither rest nor movement, neither self nor other than self, neither substance nor accident.[1]

Plotinus teaches that all the universe, as we know or conceive it, flows by emanation from the Absolute. But if we follow him in the attempt to conceive the nature of this divine process, we find ourselves moving through mere shifts of verbal logic (such as saying that the actual exclusion of all contrasts implies their potential inclusion) to the assertion of an emanation from the Super-being analogous to the light that flows from the sun, an eternally begotten Son, corresponding to the Aristotelian Mind, or νοῦς. If the Super-being excludes all opposites and contrasts, Mind includes them all. It is both rest and movement, both unity and multiplicity. Mind knows itself and contemplates itself, but also feels backward towards its own source in Super-being. Mind, contemplating the internal contrast included in its

[1] Cf. *sup.* p. 7.

own unity, becomes one as contemplating and many as contemplated. And in this manifoldness Plato's "ideas" are included; only that with Plotinus the ideal world includes the prototypes of the real world down to detail, so that every individual as well as every species has its "idea." Thus, under Plotinus, the system of Plato's ideas is rendered futile as an attempt to explain diversity, and find unity in multiplicity, for the ideas themselves are multiplied into correspondence with individuals; but at the same time it becomes a religious assertion of the actual existence in the divine mind of the ideal self of every individual. There is not only a divine and absolute "man," but there is a divine and absolute "me," with which I am called upon to bring myself into correspondence. But it is not easy to reconcile this with the essentially negative and quasi criminal nature of individuality.[1]

An emanation from Mind is the Psyche (ψυχή), which corresponds to what Plato had spoken of as the world-soul, and to Aristotle's "nature" (φύσις). This "nature," or "world-soul," works rationally in that it is an emanation from Mind, but it does not work consciously, or at least not with conscious reason. Super-being, Mind, and World-Soul constitute the Plotinian Trinity, shadowed forth in the old mythology as Uranus, Cronos, and Zeus; for the Neoplatonists recognised their Pagan

[1] See below, p. 33.

origin, and allegorised Pagan mythology as the Christians allegorised the Old Testament.

If once we can accept the paradox that by successive emanations from Super-being we can reach a phenomenal world, without qualifying the supreme and all-embracing unity of the Absolute; that is to say, if we can persuade ourselves that we can conceive of a flowing out of the Absolute without recognising anything or anywhere outside the Absolute for it to flow into, then perhaps we ought to have no difficulty in accepting Matter itself as the remotest of the emanations, and yet, at the same time, as forming a part of the immaterial and absolute Unity. But it is difficult not to feel too acutely at this point that, for all its bold assertion of monism, Neoplatonism rests on a concealed dualism. For however much we have proclaimed that non-existence is as completely embraced by the Absolute as existence, yet we can but conceive of the descent of the successive emanations of the Absolute into forms of increasing multiplicity and grossness by regarding them as diluted, or polluted, by the admixture of something else, even if it be only empty space or nothingness. All that Plotinus can do is to emphasise the purely negative nature of the material or dividing element which seems to imply remoteness from the central focus of being. Matter is nothing real or positive. It is a mere negation and lapse from reality; or else a postulate of our minds which has no actual

existence. In the direction of treating matter as a negation, Plotinus surpasses Plato himself. Plato, following Parmenides, had taken vacuum, or empty space, as the supremely non-existent, and had found in it the ultimate matter which was identical with the ultimate negation. As soon as this empty space assumed so much as geometrical dimensions or boundaries, it was in the incipient stage of its progress from non-existence to existence, so that it would seem to follow that what we know as matter is really less material than vacuity and nothingness itself. But Plotinus goes further, and declares that since empty space, being conceivable, has form, the ultimate matter must be something more vacant and formless still; and yet, combating with this disguised and attenuated dualism, is a monism which feels that, since all things are but emanations from the superlative Good, or rather Super-good, they themselves must be good too. Hence Plotinus defends the beauty of the world of sense against both Catholic and Gnostic ascetics.

The connection of the human soul with the body, however, is treated on the opposite line. It is the lapse of a fraction of the Universal Soul from the contemplation of Mind into self-contemplation and desire, which determines its entanglement with the body. Hence to be born is a disgrace, and Plotinus himself would never disclose his birthday. But there is an escape from these bonds. Man has a material, a vital, and an intelli-

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gent nature (corresponding to the *sarkic*, *psychic*, and *pneumatic* man of the Pauline Epistles), and he must turn his whole effort and affection to the higher contemplation. This will bring freedom and restoration, self-identification with Mind, and through Mind even with Super-being. But, seeing that the connection with matter was the consequence not the cause of the lapse or fall of the individual soul, it follows that escape from the limitation and shame of material being must itself be a spiritual and not a material act. Hence the fine doctrine of Plotinus as to the futility of suicide as an escape from material conditions. Only when the dominion of the sensuous man is broken will the higher man attain his supremacy.

This Neoplatonist ideal of self-identification with the Absolute, to be reached by intellectual and moral discipline and the intensity of spiritual contemplation, is hardly distinguishable from that of the contemplative Christian saint who desires to see God, and so to see all things, as God sees them, as a single and perfect whole; only that whereas the Christian held that such a consummation was only attainable in the life to come, the Neoplatonist considered that it was ideally possible to achieve it in moments of ecstasy on earth. Porphyrius, the disciple of Plotinus, who collected and edited his writings, declares that during his long acquaintance with Plotinus the latter rose four times to this mystic ecstasy, whereas he,

Porphyrius, in sixty-three years, had only once experienced it.[1]

The relations and reactions between Neoplatonism and Christianity were close. We know from Augustine's *Confessions*[2] what a stir had been made by the conversion to Christianity of the Neoplatonic philosopher, Victorinus Afer. And Bishop Gore, who has explored the tangled forest of his obscure and badly edited Christian writings, assures us[3] that they contain a great deal of what was more effectively introduced into the bosom of the Christian Church at a later date by the pseudo Dionysius-Areopagita and Scotus Eriugena. To these two we must now turn our attention.

Probably at the close of the fifth century of the Christian era (for no close agreement has yet been reached), a series of works was produced, which passed under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, Paul's Athenian convert. They dealt with the Divine Names and the Terrestrial and Celestial Hierarchies, and were the basis of all subsequent angel lore. In form they were Christian, treating the Christian Scriptures as divine oracles and accepting the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, but at the core they are little else than pure Neoplatonism. They formulate with great fervour the doctrine

[1] The account of Plotinus is largely based on Erdmann's *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, 4th ed. Berlin, 1896. Vol. i., § 128, English translation, ed. Williston S. Hough, Sonnenschein, 1889.

[2] Book 8, chapter ii.

[3] Article "Victorinus" in Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Biography*.

that the theology of negation is safer and truer than that of assertion; for any assertion as to God cannot possibly have more than partial and relative truth, since to assert that God is this or that implies some limitation or exclusion, and therefore qualifies his all-embracing Being or Super-being. We may indeed say with actual, not only relative, truth that God is in-visible, that he is in-finite, in-comprehensible, un-moved, for all of these are negations and say not what he is, but what he is not. But when we leave negation and proceed to assertion we are no longer on safe and unassailable ground. If we use such terms as "light," "life," "reason," "mind," "being," or if we say that God is good, it is because these words, signifying the best and most beautiful things we know, may be supposed to have some likeness to him; but for this very reason such assertions are dangerous and misleading, for they may produce the false impression that they are really applicable to the Deity. And this is why Scripture often prefers images or symbols of God, drawn from things which are obviously and utterly unlike him —an ox, a lion, an eagle, a reptile. For when such phrases are used it is only the dullest and grossest that can fail to see that the symbols are inadequate, hinting at something far unlike themselves, which they faintly indicate.

The works of the Areopagite were translated into Latin in the ninth century by Scotus Eriugena,

and the latter's own works, especially his great *De Divisione Naturæ*, were inspired by the same spirit. These translations and original works, between them, brought all the essentials of Neoplatonism right into the bosom of Christianity. Eriugena's own works, though very influential, were never accepted as authoritative, and are seldom expressly cited or quoted;[1] but the works of the Areopagite were welcomed without reserve, and, later on, Albertus wrote elaborate commentaries on his "Celestial" and "Ecclesiastical" Hierarchies and Thomas one on his "Divine Names."

It is impossible to exaggerate the boldness with which Eriugena pushed his Neoplatonic doctrines to their furthest extremes. But the peculiar phraseology he uses may well mislead the novice who glances at his wonderful book into attributing to him still more startling views than he actually held. Eriugena's prime division of nature, or the sum of things, is into "things which are" and "things which are not." But by "things which are not" he generally means "things which we can only describe by negation" or "things of which we can only make negative predications." The reader, therefore, must not be too much startled by finding that all purely spiritual beings —not only the Platonic "ideas" or prototypes, but angels and God himself—are assigned blankly to the class of "things that are not," in distinc-

[1] Cf. p. 42.

tion to " things that are," or objects of sense. In another passage, however, Eriugena describes material things as non-existent, relatively to the higher reality of immaterial things. And these two views he enunciates side by side, as illustrating different ways in which the distinction between things that are and things that are not may be understood; not in any way as contradictory views that need reconciliation. We must remember this when we read elsewhere that since you cannot assert God to be this thing or that thing, or indeed any " quid " whatever, it follows that he is nothing (*nihil* or *nihilum*). It hardly need be said, after this, that Eriugena goes the whole length in asserting that the theology of negation alone has absolute validity. He will not even allow such words as Super-being, Super-goodness, Super-truth, to be valid, except on the plea that though in form they are assertions, they are in fact negations. But nevertheless the theology of assertion must accompany that of negation, for if it has not an absolute, it has at least a relative truth. In asserting that " God is true " the implied limitations and exclusions are false, but the positive content is true, so that we learn after all that negation is only a freeing of assertion from its trammels and limitations. " God is truth" is only relatively true. " God is not truth," which must instantly be added, is absolutely true, but its value, after all, only consists in its removing the limita-

tions from "God is truth." It denies, but it only denies limitations and negations. And this, of course, is supremely true of the proposition that God is "nihilum."

In fact, in approaching Neoplatonism, as we have done, from the formal side, we are in danger of missing its whole religious significance. Plotinus was the greatest of Pagan, and Eriugena one of the greatest of Christian mystics; and Neoplatonism in its entirety is mystic from core to circumference. I use the word "mystic" in the sense in which he who feels himself directly conscious of spiritual facts, or, we may put it, he who is conscious of direct spiritual and emotional reactions between himself and the Supreme, is a mystic. He has "felt a Presence that disturbs him with the joy of elevated thoughts." He may reason about it, draw logical or metaphysical conclusions from it, even analyse the degrees and stages by which he has reached it; but if he is a true mystic he is essentially expressing an experience, not thinking out a conclusion, and if he makes himself intelligible to a kindred soul he kindles an analogous experience in it. Plotinus, the Areopagite, and Eriugena are, in this sense, mystics before anything else. And what may well appear as chill negations in an exposition are to the mystics themselves glowing experiences. They record a sense of the Supreme so vivid and intense, of felt communion so ineffable, that it is not the analytical intellect that perceives,

but the very pulse of the soul that feels, the inadequacy of any expression whatsoever in human words. Such expression indeed is felt to be so limiting that instead of quickening it narrows, stifles, and denies the fullness of experience. Unless the mystic speaks in consciously inadequate symbols, he finds that every phrase he utters recognises restrictions and implies limitations which his sense of the infinite has transcended and rejected. And, having asserted that God is light, he is at once shocked by the material image he has used, and must contradict it by saying that God is not light. If he tries to express the unshaken constancy of God by speaking of his "abiding" (*status*), he at once resents the implication of rigidness and stagnation, and denies what he has uttered. If he says that God "moves through all things," he is shocked by the sense that he has not only spoken in material language, but has implied a certain change and instability, and adds that he is "not moving." Or he takes refuge in combining contradictions, and speaks of God as a *status mobilis*, or a *motus stabilis*.

And it is only by thinking of the Neoplatonists from this side that we can understand why, having declared that God is not Being because that would exclude Non-being, they go on to say that God is Super-being rather than to say that he is Super-nonentity (as indeed on occasion Eriugena practically does): and why, if goodness is not to be

encumbered with the limitations that distinguish it from anything else, God is Super-goodness rather than Super-badness. The answer is never given because the question is never asked, and the question is never asked because the mystic feels that in moving along the line of goodness he is in fact approaching that supreme reality in communion with which all distinctions are lost, all limitations escaped, and in the contemplation of which all language becomes inadequate. In a word, in moving along the lines of being, goodness, love, we are approaching the unity which is real, and in speaking of evil and of hate, we are moving in the direction of the diversity and conflict which constitute the world of mere semblance, illusion, and negation.

We shall encounter the negative theology of the Neoplatonic mystics once again when we come to Thomas Aquinas.[1] Meanwhile we may conclude this chapter by noting a few characteristic utterances or doctrines of Eriugena and touching on one or two questions which they suggest.

Eriugena's main division of nature, including all that is and is not, is into the Uncreated Creating, the Created Creating, the Created Uncreating, and the Uncreated Uncreating. The first and last of these alike are found on examination to be God.

[1] pp. 86 *sqq.*

When we contemplate him as the source of all things, we think of him as the Uncreated Creating. When we contemplate him as the goal, to whom all things return, and in whom all things everlastingly abide, to whom nothing can be added, and from whom nothing can be subtracted, we think of him as the Uncreated Uncreating. The Created Creating indicates the prototypes, "ideas," or angels; the Created Uncreating, the material and phenomenal universe; and so these two middle terms also combine, as the creation.

In his idealism Eriugena is as far-going as he is in his monism. Matter itself is only an interlacing of immaterial attributes. We easily see that all the qualities or attributes of a "thing" are immaterial; for we can only conceive of them as existing in a consciousness. The colour, place, form, and so forth of a "thing" are but mental impressions, not material facts; and these qualities are all that there is of it. There is no nucleus of "thing" which *possesses* these attributes, except again in our own mental conception. And evil is as unreal as matter. It does not exist; and the only possible hell that there can be is the discovery by a soul that the things to which it has given its love are absolutely non-existent.

What, then, it may be asked, of Eriugena's orthodoxy? Pope Nicolas I. had demanded his expulsion from Paris in A.D. 860, but apparently without effect; and his book was publicly burnt

as heretical in A.D. 1225 because of its popularity amongst the Albigenses,[1] but he apparently regarded himself as a quite orthodox and devout son of the Church. He recognised authority, and declared that there could not be any contradiction between authority and reason, only it must be good authority, and it must be sound reason. And theoretically reason must necessarily precede authority, for authority could utter nothing that it had not reached by reason. This seems to amount to the tacit exclusion of a really authoritative revelation altogether; at any rate it is evident that in Eriugena's system the expressions alike of Scripture and of the Christian Fathers must be so interpreted or allegorised as to agree with his own philosophy. It is they, not he, that must really yield wherever there is a conflict; and the apparent deference paid to them will involve no sacrifice; for the formal tribute they exact is easily paid, since Neoplatonism can adapt itself to one system of dogma or mythology as easily as to another. A Trinity of Essence, Virtue, and Operation, or of Being, Willing, and Knowing, can find a place in it at least as naturally as a Trinity of Uranus, Cronos, and Zeus, or of Super-being, Mind, and World-Soul.

[1] Erdmann, § 154, 1.

CHAPTER III

THE MIGRATIONS OF ARISTOTLE AND THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF ARISTOTELIANISM

We are now to follow the fates of Aristotle and Aristotelianism, and as we shall remain throughout in much closer contact with Aristotle's actual works than we did or could with Plato's in the last chapter, it will be well to begin with a short survey of the extent and scope of Aristotle's extant works, or what pass as such. The history of his own manuscripts is a romance in itself. They lay for a hundred and fifty years in a damp and wormy cellar in the Troad, and it is impossible to determine from the accounts that have come down to us in what relation they stood when recovered to the manuscripts current in the Aristotelian school at Athens; and it remains uncertain to this day what is the real origin of the text we now possess. Editors have been recurrently haunted by the idea that many of the existing discrepancies and difficulties it presents may be due to combination in our present *corpus Aristotelicum* of two different recensions. Further, there is the greatest difficulty in harmonising or even relating the early lists of Aristotle's works and characterisations of his style with the works that we now know. These matters

however need not much trouble us, for long before the period with which we are concerned the Aristotelian text had been fixed much as we have it now, and though certain palpably spurious works were sometimes current under his name, we shall not have to deal with them; so we may assume the canon as well as the text with which we are familiar.

What, then, is the scope of Aristotle's work? In the first place there is the *Organon*—the group of treatises on which formal logic has rested ever since. They are an exposition of the art and science of reasoning, and they attempt to determine by rule and formula the legitimate and illegitimate processes of inference as we advance from the known to the unknown and draw our conclusions from our premises. The Aristotelian logic is purely formal, dealing with the instrument of thought independently of the matter upon which it is exercised. It is stilted and artificial and living thought never actually moves n the Aristotelian "figures"; yet it has been found a potent instrument of analysis and is still of the highest value in checking and exposing loose thinking. Portions of the *Organon* were known in Europe throughout the middle ages, and at some periods formal logic was cultivated with extreme diligence and extreme pedantry.

We come next to the treatise known as the "Physics," which is not at all what the title suggests to the modern mind. It is the treatment of the

widest possible problems of nature, which means all changing or moving things; for movement, in the Aristotelian sense, includes all growth, decay, or internal modification. In the first place, then, time, space, and movement themselves are considered; for movement can only be defined in terms of time and space. Change means becoming, and accordingly the whole theory of causation and development falls under the domain of "Physics." The regularity of nature leaves room for apparent chance and "Physics" discusses and analyses the conceptions of fortune, chance, and fate, and seeks to determine their rational basis. It deals, too, with such matters as the infinite divisibility of a line and the question whether space can exist apart from the things in it and whether there can be an infinitely great body. The central doctrines of form, matter, actuality, potentiality, and so forth, of which more hereafter, are dealt with in the same treatise; and lastly the relation of movement to rest and the question whether moving and changing nature can be regarded as a self-sustaining system, or whether it implies some immaterial principle, spaceless and motionless, the unmoving source of motion, upon which it depends, carries "Physics" to the boundary of its own domain where it reaches out towards "Metaphysics." Aristotle holds that although the movement of nature is eternal it cannot give any final account of itself without appealing to a divine principle of rest,

which is itself the supreme and effortless energy and blessedness.

Then we take nature in detail. First of all there is Astronomy (*De Cælo*). All the heavenly bodies have re-entrant cycles, and Aristotle regards them as imperishable. Therefore Astronomy is concerned with the study of imperishable moving bodies, that are subject to no change except that of periodic movement. But the *De Cælo* includes more than astronomy, for it deals with the four elements, considered in their natural cosmic order, earth at the centre, water next, then air, then fire. But since the elements can (in Aristotle's opinion) change into each other, they form a kind of link by which we pass from the study of unchanging and permanent moving things to that of changing and transient substances and beings. Passing to these latter, therefore, we first study the general principles of combination and dissolution, that is to say, we examine how concrete things come into and pass out of existence (*De Generatione et Corruptione*); and then pass on to the material changes and transformations in the envelopes of the earth, which are nearest akin to the celestial and merely elemental orders; that is to say, to the *Meteorologica*.

Then we should expect a treatise on chemistry, or the combination and resolution of elements in detail; but this branch of study had been so little developed in Aristotle's time that all he had to say

about inorganic nature is included in the treatises we have already mentioned; and we go straight on to the study of Life. Here Aristotle shows the highest originality and independence. In the *De Anima* (which we have to translate "On the Soul," because the same word means "life" and "soul" both in Greek and Latin) he deals with all the general phenomena of Life. He distinguishes between the various grades of life, that is to say, the various groups of vital functions or phenomena. The first and simplest group with which he deals, is that of reproduction and nutrition, shared by vegetables; then follow sensation and movement which are common to all animals, and finally the higher range of intellectual and spiritual faculties peculiar to man. After *life* we come to *living things* in detail, and first of all to Natural History which would theoretically include botany, but we have nothing considerable from Aristotle on that subject. His study of animal life, on the other hand, is wide and deep. Our present zoological classification is said still to bear marked traces of his genius. Distinctions, analogous to those between vertebrate and invertebrate animals, for instance, and classes such as the *crustacea*, may be traced to him. In addition to natural history in this general sense, Aristotle wrote a series of treatises on special phenomena of life — for instance on youth and age, sleeping and waking, breathing, and so forth. He made a special study of animal

movements, and also of Comparative Anatomy. Finally his study of natural history includes a treatise on Embryology, which, for instance, traces the period of merely vegetable functioning through which the foetus of an animal passes on the way to its fuller development, and the successive differentiating of the main organs. This must suffice as an indication of the wide sweep of Aristotle's study of natural history.

Then he turns to the specifically human field, and writes of Ethics, or the general principles of right conduct; from which he passes on to Politics, the connecting link being found in the theory of education, conceived in its widest extent, physical, intellectual, moral, and artistic. These treatises on Ethics and Politics are a still unexhausted mine of practical wisdom, and it is hard to think that they will ever be superseded as instruments of education in its best and highest sense.

The whole group of human sciences is rounded off by treatises on art, the "Poetics" and the "Rhetoric"; the former of which especially has had incalculable influence both on literature and on criticism; and it is not Aristotle's fault if that influence has not always been for the best.

Lastly, to crown the whole, comes the treatise on Metaphysics. In studying material and still more in studying vital phenomena, Aristotle had become convinced that physical phenomena point to something beyond themselves. In physics,

motion, strictly speaking, never originates, because all bodily movement seems to be produced by some body already moving; and consequently motion gives no account of its origin, except in the case of animals, such as man, in whom motion certainly appears in a sense to originate. But animal movement, particularly in man, has not a material but a spiritual origin, for it comes from a yearning or desire in him for something outside or beyond him. It appears, then, that the origin of movement must be spiritual and not material. The whole organism of the material world indicates some immaterial object of desire on which it depends. For the heavens, conceived as the material origin of all material movements that are not voluntary, seem themselves to be animated, and animated (in so far like man) by a desire directed towards some immaterial principle outside themselves.[1] The desiring and the desired, therefore, to dependence on which all movement can ultimately be reduced, are both of them immaterial. Students of Dante will remember that when he sees a point of intensest light, with rainbow swirls around it, Beatrice tells him that "on that point all heaven and nature hang."[2] She is repeating the phrase of Aristotle literally, and Dante at once recognises that that point is God, and that the circling rainbow forms are the hierarchies of angels.

[1] Cf. *Paradiso*, i. 76 *sqq.*; xxiv. 103 *sqq.* and other passages.
[2] *Paradiso*, xxviii. 41 *sq.*

Aristotle's study of metaphysics, then, was the study of the immaterial principle on which all heaven and nature hang. It was his theology, his examination of the ultimate nature of Being. Thus Aristotle begins with motion, and is led by studying the motion of material things to believe in something immaterial and unmoving on which material things depend. But when he comes to give us, as he does in the "Physics," in the *De Cælo* and in the "Metaphysics," his account of the nature and meaning of this spiritual principle, we find that his conception of it far transcends anything that his mere inferences from the material world can cover. We find him now sharing with Parmenides and Plato an exalted rapture, or a sense of awe, in contemplating the One and the Perfect, the supreme Actuality, presupposed in all potentiality, which shows us that he, too, is a mystic, and which enables us to catch from him something of the august emotion he experienced in that contemplation of the Truth, which he regarded as at once the divinest life of man himself and the truest suggestion to man of what must be the life of God.

But the modern reader must be on his guard against attributing to Aristotle the definiteness of theistic belief which these last words might easily suggest to him. It is true that one of Aristotle's leading principles, and one in which he most nearly approaches Plato, is the teleology of his conception of nature, that is to say, his belief that nature has

purposes and is goal-ful. But to our natural question: Is nature, then, a conscious being, that has purposes, such as we have? we must expect no answer. We must learn not to ask it when we are trying to understand Aristotle, for it seems clear that he did not ask it himself. We must be content to think of him as resting in the perception that there is an analogy between the goings on of nature and the goings on that we think of as purposeful. Nature works towards goals, and the goings on of nature must be read and can only be understood in the light of these goals, or ends. What a thing is, is determined by what it is making for and striving to become; and we must always think of the incomplete that is becoming as implying the complete that is. And here you will see how closely Aristotle's "forms," determining what a thing is when it really comes to be itself, relate themselves to Plato's "ideas," or predetermined realities towards which nature is striving.

Such was Aristotle. But during the middle ages up to the thirteenth (or the very end of the twelfth) century all that range of systematic thinking, with the exception of some part of the logical treatises, was unknown to Western Christianity. Boethius (*c.* A.D. 480-525) had translated the logical treatises in question and after his time all further touch with Aristotle was lost for centuries to Western Europe.

This severance of the Western Church from

Aristotle is a particularly striking illustration of the practical inaccessibility of Greek culture in mediæval Europe; for during a great part of the period in question Aristotle was known and studied with much diligence in Constantinople. There was constant intercourse between Western Europe and Constantinople, and Greek was spoken in many places in Southern Italy, but nevertheless Greek literature was practically a sealed book to almost all the scholars of the Western Church. Eriugena is the only one of the small group of Greek scholars in the West whom we have had or shall have occasion to notice; and when at last Aristotle did find his way into the Western world, he came at first not through Constantinople and from the Greek original, but by a strange circuitous route, and in almost stranger company, of which I must now give some account.[1]

In the fifth century of the Christian era (say A.D. 428), Nestorius preached in Constantinople against the idea that Mary was the "mother of God." It

[1] My chief authorities (in addition to Erdmann) for the historical statements that follow are Wenrich, *De Auctorum Graecorum versionibus et commentariis Syriacis, Arabicis, Armenicis, Persicisque commentatio*, etc. Leipsic, 1842.

Jourdain, *Recherches critiques sur l'age et l'origin des traductions Latines d'Aristote.* Nouvelle Edition, Paris, 1843.

Dieterici *Alfārābī's Philosophische Abhandlungen, aus dem Arabischen übersetzt.* Leiden, 1892.

Carra de Vaux, *Avicenne.* Paris, 1900.

T. J. de Boer, *Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam.* Stuttgart, 1901. English translation by Edward R. Jones. Luzac & Co., 1903.

Renan's well-known book on Averrhoes may also be consulted.

was offensive to his sense of reverence to use this word θεοτόκος. "But," retorted his opponents in effect, "you admit that Mary was the mother of Christ, and that Christ was God. So if you maintain that Mary was not the mother of God, you are making Christ two Persons, the Christ who was God and the Christ whose mother was Mary. That is heresy; and it is no use for you to say that you believe in the One Person of Christ. At any rate you do not teach it." Eutyches, on the other hand, whom we may put some twenty years later, asserted that after the Incarnation (which he did not place at the moment of the Conception but when Christ was grown up) there ceased to be two natures in Christ, the human nature and the divine nature being unified. So here we have two opposite heresies. The Nestorian doctrine, or implication, that Christ was two Persons and the Eutychian teaching that he was only one Nature; the orthodox belief being that he was two Natures in one Person. Both of these sets of heretics had to keep out of the way of the authorities, and to retreat to a distance from Constantinople. They found a refuge, however, in Edessa, just within the Roman Empire; and a flourishing school of students was established there, whose classical language was Syriac. They were not exclusively theologians. Many of them were physicians. And they translated a great deal of mathematical, philosophical, and medical and other scientific

literature, Aristotle included, into Syriac. These scholars were chiefly Nestorians, but some of them were Eutychians. Towards the end of the fifth century, in A.D. 489, the Emperor Zeno not only deposed the professors at Edessa, but broke up their school, on which they migrated to Nisibis, just over the Persian border, and carried on their work much as before. The Persians gave them a hearty welcome and they became the means of introducing Greek culture into the Persian Empire. Certain translations into Persian were made, but the classical language of philosophy continued to be Syriac. In the middle of the seventh century Persia was conquered by the Caliph Omar, and in the middle of the eighth century his dynasty (the Ommiades) was superseded by the Abbassid dynasty to which Haroun-al-Raschid (reigned A.D. 786-809) belonged. The Abbassides had long suffered exile and oppression, and had received a great deal of hospitality amongst the Persians, and when they came to power they were well disposed both to Persian culture and to the Nestorian and Eutychian scholars who kept their subjects in contact with the great Greek world. Mamun in particular (reigned A.D. 813-833), one of Haroun-al-Raschid's immediate successors, instituted a system of translations into Arabic from all languages and especially from Greek, a prominent place being given to the works of Aristotle. Arabic and Persian were the most widely recognised vehicles of culture in his

kingdom, but Persian was preferred for poetry and Arabic for science and philosophy. The Nestorian physicians Honain ben Ishak, with his son and nephew, and Kosta ben Luka, are the best known of the group of ninth-century translators of Aristotle, and they translated sometimes direct from the Greek, but oftener from the Syriac. Aristotle's "Physics," for instance, was translated by Honain from the Greek into Arabic, but the *De Generatione et Corruptione* from the Syriac. Presently a little group of Moslem students of Aristotle began to work upon these translations. They had access to other Greek works, including commentaries; they had a great reverence for Plato and a Neoplatonic work was current in their circle under the name of "The Theology of Aristotle," though its content was pure Plotinianism. This school of Arabic students of Aristotelian philosophy stood somewhat apart from the orthodox Mussulman theologians, and it was only under liberally minded Caliphs, who had more or less wide interests and who could protect their favourites against religious intolerance, that the study of Aristotle flourished.

The best known of this group of Aristotelians is Avicenna (A.D. 980-1037). But he himself acknowledges his immense debt to his precursor Alfarabi († A.D. 950). He tells us that having read Aristotle's "Metaphysics" forty times through, he knew it by heart but could not comprehend it.

But a book was once pressed upon him as a bargain by an agent he met in a bookseller's shop; and ultimately he was persuaded to buy it, against his will. It turned out to be a treatise on the leading ideas of Aristotle's "Metaphysics" by Alfarabi, and as he read it Avicenna saw the whole meaning of the book unfold itself before him. He was filled with delight and next day he gave alms freely to the poor as a thank-offering to God. His perseverance was certainly rewarded, for he gained a mastery of the whole range of Aristotle's works, which he combined with many Platonic and Neoplatonic elements, and which he interpreted in their entirety. His method was not to write commentaries on the texts, but to cover all the ground covered by Aristotle, working in all that he thought true and germane to the subject from other sources. His Aristotelian compendium or cyclopædia was apparently translated into Latin before Aristotle's works themselves, and the influence in Europe of this Aristotelian work (and still more of Avicenna's medical treatises) was enormous.

We shall refer again to Avicenna when we come to deal with psychology,[1] but our present concern is with the harmonising or combining of the Platonic ideas and the Aristotelian forms which was really accomplished by Alfarabi, but which owed its success, at any rate in the West, to Avicenna's handling of it.

[1] Cf. pp. 173 *sq.*

It has been hinted by Erdmann that a certain unreality attaches to the twelfth century controversy between the Realists and Nominalists, because their problem had reached its ultimate solution in Mesopotamia before it was ever raised in Europe.[1] The solution he refers to is that of Alfarabi and Avicenna; and we cannot approach it better than by trying to understand what the later controversy that it solved by anticipation was.

Do general terms such as " man," " fish," " lion," stand for *realities?* Or are they merely *names* given collectively and individually to the members of a group, in virtue of certain common characteristics? If you believe the first, then to you the " absolute man " or " humanity itself " is a Platonic *idea*, and you are a Realist; if the latter, " humanity " is to you an Aristotelian *form*, and you are a Nominalist. To the novice in mediæval philosophy a difficulty is presented by the fact that Realism is not contrasted (as amongst us) with Idealism, but is identical with it; for the very question is whether the *ideas* are real. The Realist says they are. The Nominalist says that the individual or concrete entity is the only ultimate reality, and that the " ideas," which the Platonist falsely conceives to be such, are in truth mere abstract *names*.

Now Alfarabi and Avicenna saw very clearly that however fluid and elastic the power of grouping

[1] § 184, 1.

may be in itself, the classifier ought to be doing something more than arranging an arbitrary pattern to suit his own taste. He is seeking to discover lines of partition and division, which are not only convenient, but convenient because they correspond to some kind of reality. How can we better conceive of this reality than by regarding it as the scheme which existed in the divine mind, and which is reflected in creation? To the question, then, whether the universals are pre-existing types, some partial conformity to which constitutes the existence and intelligibility of concrete things, or whether they exist in the things and are drawn from them by mental abstraction, the Arabians answer that they exist both before and in and after the things. They exist before them as types in the mind of God, just as the type of what he is going to make exists in the artificer's mind before he makes it; for all things are to God what the artificer's works are to his own mind. But the universals also exist after the things, in the mind of man when he has abstracted them from the concrete things in which alone God has revealed and embodied them. And, lastly, they exist in the things as well as before and after them, because it is just the things into which God puts them and out of which man gets them. This doctrine is usually expressed in the formula that the universals exist *ante res*, *in rebus*, *et post res*.[1]

[1] See p. 179 for the original passage.

Now this harmonising effort has generally, and very rightly, been regarded as a great intellectual achievement, but it was not a real reconciliation, for while it bleached and mutilated the Platonic doctrine its reaction upon Aristotelianism produced far-reaching modifications which we must now trace as revealed in the Scholastic philosophy.

When the "ideas" are not regarded as a hierarchy of absolute existences to which actual things approximate in various degrees, but as creative conceptions in the divine mind which are actually realised in created things, there seems no reason why we should think either of the absolute "beauty" or the absolute "animal" as one of these universals that exist before things; for God never makes a thing which is beautiful and nothing else. It is always a beautiful poem or a beautiful woman or a beautiful horse. Neither does God make an "animal" that is neither a horse nor a man nor any other kind of animal. So the universals that exist before things, and are embodied in them, do not cover all the Platonic ideas, but only the ideas of species. And a similar restriction seems to impose itself on the Aristotelian forms, or "universals after things." For if they are, so to speak, the re-discovery of the conceptions in the Creator's mind; and if "animal" was never a creative thought except as involved in "man," "horse," and so forth, there is really no such form as "animal," for if a creature has the form "horse," that

includes all the characteristics of "animal," and so does every other specific animal form. "Animality," then, exists nowhere except as included in some specific form; and there is no need to think of it as a form at all. So "form" ceases to cover the whole range of human abstractions and classifications, and applies only to the particular abstractions that constitute species, or rather discover them. Thus the Aristotelian conception of "form" loses its elasticity and fluidity altogether; and becomes rigid and absolute under the influence of Avicenna's formula. You can, of course, continue to make any classifications and abstractions you like. You may regard man sometimes as a member of the whole group of living things including plants; sometimes as a member of the group of animals, including brutes; sometimes as in a group by himself. But you must not, when speaking carefully, say that he has the animal or vital form. If he has the form of humanity, that form embraces all his characteristics and cannot admit another form into partnership. When we say that man is an animal, we mean that his form includes certain characteristics which are also included in the horse-form, but not in the cabbage-form. And this was the doctrine formally defended by Thomas Aquinas, who expressly attacked the conception of "plurality of substantial forms," and declared that any concrete individual is constituted by the union of matter with one,

and only one, substantial form.[1] By "substantial form" is meant the form which makes a "substance," or independent self-existing individual, what it is, for instance, a stone, a tree, a lion, a man, or such and such an angel. It is contrasted with an "accidental form," which may have either of two meanings. It may refer to a quality or experience of some "substance," which can have no separate or independent existence of its own apart from the substance, such as pallor, for instance, or weight or length, which can only exist as attributes of pale, heavy, or long substances, that is to say beings: or such as love or hope, which can only exist as experiences of a loving or hoping substance or being.[2] Or, secondly, "accidental form" may be applied to such a thing as a house, which is an arrangement of bricks, timber, etc., intended to serve a certain purpose, the materials of which have undergone no organic change and collectively constitute no proper individuality. Thus the form of any manufactured or constructed article, if we regard it as a unit, not as an assemblage of parts, is an accidental form.

Returning to substantial forms, we register the dogma that no individual, constituted as such by nature, can have more than one substantial form; and so the possible forms are limited in number and are definitely divided from each other. Thus,

[1] See pp. 80 *sq.*

[2] Cf. *Vita Nuova*, § 25, 7-9. Amore non è per sè siccome sostanza, ma è accidente in sostanza.

where nature is continuous, philosophy draws a series of definite lines. It follows that if there is any continuous movement by which one thing passes into another, there must come a definite moment at which one form disappears and another takes its place. Under the earlier form the matter may indeed be prepared and disposed to receive the later form, and this process may be continuous, but the actual superseding of one form by the other is definite and instantaneous. Thus, to take a modern illustration (and I shall not limit myself by any fear of anachronisms in choosing illustrations to make these difficult matters as plain as may be), litmus is blue in an alkaline and red in an acid solution. Take a bowl of any alkaline solution tinged blue by litmus, and gradually drop acid into it. To ordinary methods of observation the tincture will remain as blue as ever until the moment comes when it suddenly turns red, after that it becomes no redder however much acid you add. Until the acid has completely neutralised the alkali the process is one of disposing the blue mixture to become red, but at the critical moment it instantaneously ceases to be blue and becomes red. There is to the rough observation of which we are speaking neither an interval nor a neutral moment nor a grading. It will be noticed that the illustration is drawn from the accidental form of colour, but it will probably serve as a support to the mind in picturing how an embryonic animal,

for example, might be regarded at a certain stage as having a form of merely vegetable vitality, but as being gradually prepared or "disposed" to receive a higher form of animal vitality. Such an embryo would, according to the mediæval Aristotelians, remain absolutely and unqualifiedly vegetable until, at a certain moment, the form of vegetable vitality disappeared and that of animal appeared. The embryo becomes animal *at the same moment* at which it ceases to be vegetable, just as the same point determines the end of one section of a line and the beginning of another, while occupying no space itself. The importance of this conception will be seen when we come to deal with the theory of the soul.[1]

Further, this conception of matter under one form being "disposed" to receive another form, brings with it a close approximation to Platonic ways of thinking. The "disposition" of the matter may be more or less complete and satisfactory and the form may therefore be more or less perfectly received or imprinted, and so we come back to something very like the Platonic conception of the concrete individual reaching out towards a pre-existing type, which it only partially realises; and the "form," however strenuously we may go on repeating the Aristotelian formula that it exists only in the individual and not apart, is nevertheless acquiring a suggestion of absolute-

[1] See pp. 175 *sqq.*

ness and fixity very far from the pure Aristotelian relativity.

Moreover, the rigidity of the conception of form raises other questions which never troubled Aristotle. What is the difference between two horses or two men? Not a difference of form, for the horse-form or man-form is identical in all members of the species. It must then be something incidental to the disposition of the particular matter of which each individual is made. For in the first place just as two benches may be made of the same wood in kind, but cannot be made of the same identical wood, so though two individuals have the same form and *like* matter, yet one has not the same *identical* matter that the other has. Their matter is "numerically" distinct, to use the technical phrase, each having its own *materia signata*, or material "marked off" to it. Thus matter is the principle of individuation, as form is the principle of intelligibility; two horses are horses because they have the same horse-form, and are two because each horse has its own allowance, so to speak, of matter, which differs numerically from that of the other. But is not one horse swifter than the other or better tempered? Do they not differ in colour, in proportions, and so on, and even in sex? Yes, and these differences follow from the different disposition of the matter which has received the horse-form in each case. They are the individuating accidents or principles

(*principia vel accidentia individuantia*) which distinguish the individual "existence" of this horse from the common "essence" of all horses. They are never regarded as forming a "kind" with its own form, even if they are regularly transmitted from parent to child. It is a dogma, for instance, that "man" is one species; so that colour, even of a race, cannot be "formal," that is to say, constituent of a species of man, and included in this or that man's "form." The line between the form and the individuating principles incidental to the "disposition" of matter becomes at this point quite arbitrary and artificial, resting as it does on the conception of species as absolute.

Lastly, the "first matter" out of which all material things are formed is in itself without form at all, that is to say, without any characteristics or "actuality" whatever; but it has the potentiality of becoming anything. Is it capable of existing in this formlessness? And is it intelligible in itself? No. God created first matter under a number of different forms from the first, but not in its formless independence. It can change its form, but it can never be formless. In itself it is absolutely unintelligible. Even God understands it only in conjunction with form. Aristotle himself, regarding first matter as a pure abstraction of the mind, regarding the concrete as the only existent in the prime sense of the word, and not troubling himself about the impossibility of a

"plurality of forms" in a creature, could divide form and matter as he chose, in one way at one time and another at another. Plato, regarding matter as a negation, need not trouble about its creation. But Augustine, being both a Platonist and a Christian believer in creation, held that formless matter, however negative, was created by God. The Christian Aristotelians could not accept his teaching. They were too deeply imbued with the idea that anything that exists must have form, so they declared that God created first matter indeed, but created it under forms; formless matter being incapable of separate existence and being unintelligible, so that God himself has not the "idea" of it in isolation from form.[1]

If the reader finds it a severe exercise to follow all this, let him take comfort in the reflection that when Dante, in the course of his studies, came to the question "whether first matter is understood by God" he was so baffled by it that he turned aside from its consideration, and from the direct study of philosophy altogether, hoping to return to the attack with better success presently;[2] and meanwhile (not to stray too far from his loved studies) he took up the consideration of moral and social questions; or in his own allegorical language, since his lady (Philosophy) was stern and unresponsive, he relinquished his "sweet

[1] For passages in illustration of the main points here discussed, see pp. 80 *sqq.*

[2] *Convivio*, iv. 1: 60-69.

rhymes of love " for a season and turned to other, but always kindred, matter, hoping hereafter to return and find more grace. Ultimately it appears he came to philosophically heretical conclusions which fitted better into his poetry than into his Aristotelian system of thought; for he repeatedly asserts or implies that there was a distinct creation of first matter as a pure potentiality.[1]

The reaction upon Aristotelianism of the Alfarabi-Avicenna attempt at harmonising Plato and Aristotle could not have been so profound had not the natural tendencies of the Christian thought and the whole tradition of the Church before the revival of Aristotle verged towards Platonic absolutism rather than Aristotelian relativity. But it is interesting to note that the mediæval Aristotelians never knew that they were really more than half Platonists. They did not regard the belief in the " universals before things " in the Creator's mind, which they accepted, as at all equivalent to the Platonic doctrine of independently existing " ideas," which they expressly repudiated. Ideas of species had no independent existence; and if the ideas of " one " and " being " had, it was only because they were absolutely identical with God himself.[2]

Returning from this digression as to the ultimate

[1] See *Paradiso*, vii. 133-138; xxix. 31-36. Cf. pp. 149 *sqq*.
[2] See p. 84.

consequences of the Arabian Neoplatonic and Aristotelian compromise, we note that after Avicenna's death the stream of Arabian thought in the East, so far as we are at present concerned with it, ran dry. We may note in passing that Avicenna was born in the century of the Persian poet Firdusi and died in the century of Omar Khayyám, so that he lived surrounded by Persian culture, which ran to poetry and mysticism rather than philosophy and theology. After his death Persian influences prevailed in the cultured world of Islam. In the political world the Abbassid dynasty fell; and in the theological world a reaction set in which banned Aristotelian studies over the whole of Eastern Islam.

But meanwhile a strange thing had happened. The Ommiades, whom the Abbassides had driven out of the Caliphate, had been savage and uncouth as rulers, but when the dynasty was almost exterminated and one sole representative of it escaped to Spain and was received there by a portion of the faithful who made him their Caliph, the dynasty became patrons of learning such as they had never been in their days of greatness. And just at the time when Avicenna in the eleventh century represented the last of the great teachers in the Eastern world, the Mohammedans of Spain began to take up Aristotelian studies. In the twelfth century a series of Mohammedan Aristotelians kept the torch burning, and the greatest of them was

Averrhoes, who lived close up to the end of the century. He studied Avicenna sedulously, but he repudiated many of his doctrines. He believed himself to be an uncompromising Aristotelian, but as a matter of fact he was profoundly impressed by Neoplatonic emanational conceptions. He did not work up the material of Aristotle in an independent form as Avicenna did, but he took the whole text in Arabic and wrote an Arabic commentary upon it. Indeed he wrote three commentaries—the Greater, the Lesser, and the Short Commentary. When Dante says that he saw amongst the virtuous heathen the man who made the "great commentary," he does not mean the commentary *par excellence*, but the *Commentum magnum*. It is the name of a work, not a characterisation of it. In his three commentaries Averrhoes expounded to the best of his ability Aristotle's doctrine, and he added running refutations of Avicenna. He died in exile, or disfavour, in A.D. 1198. There was a theological reaction in Spain, similar to that which had previously taken place in the East, and experts in Arabian history and literature tell us that Arabic manuscripts of the works of Averrhoes are rare and imperfect and his place in the Arabic tradition inconspicuous.

But now at last the Christian West was ripe. The torch that had gone out in Edessa to be rekindled in Nisibis, to be fanned into a blaze in eastern Islam, and then extinguished there only

to burn again in Spain, was indeed quenched there, too, by the same influences, but not until Christian Europe was at last ready to catch it as it dropped from the last Islamite hand, and rekindle it once more.

For a long time past an adventurous Christian scholar here and there had gone far afield on his studious travels, and had found that the Mohammedan schools had a learning which Christian students had lost. It was impossible that the twelfth century should remain indifferent to this learning, for it was a period of many-sided intellectual activity. Men like Bernard Sylvester and John of Salisbury had a range of knowledge that seems to be seldom realised. And it is in the twelfth century, too, that modern literature definitely begins. It was the century of the Arthurian poems of Chrestien of Troyes, of the "Roman de Troie" of Benoit de Ste. Maur, and of the "Roman de la Rose." Twelfth-century scholars were great students of Ovid, had a good share of Platonic lore, in one way or another, and altogether had a wider range of classical reading and culture than survived into the thirteenth century. This was the century also of the systematising of Christian dogma. Peter Lombard, the Master of the Sentences,[1] died in A.D. 1160, and his book, which long remained the great theological text-book, is an attempt to systematise the body

[1] Cf. *Paradiso*, x. 106-108.

of dogmatic belief accepted by the Church. He compares different authorities with each other, and, as far as he can, harmonises them, or, where this is impossible, gives his decision as to the preferable opinion. The work consists of four books dealing respectively with the Trinity, the Creation, the Incarnation, and the Sacraments—the Sacraments rather strangely including the whole doctrine of the resurrection and the final state.

In such an age the knowledge that there was a learning in the Mohammedan schools which Europe did not possess must have stimulated men's minds to a high degree, and at last, it is not clear exactly when, translations began to be made. In the thirteenth century the full tide of translation set in, particularly in the court of Frederick the Second and in Spain; Michael Scot and the converted Jew Avendeath being amongst the most active translators. Aristotle's works and the commentaries of Averrhoes were now translated from the Arabic. At last the Western world had recovered Aristotle, and it had the help of a brilliant interpreter in Avicenna and a fine and honest commentator in Averrhoes, in sounding its way through the dim medium of the far-travelled Latin translations upon which it had to work.

So now the whole body of Aristotle's science and philosophy came with a rush upon the Western world, and the intellectual shock it produced can well be imagined. In astronomy alone had sub-

stantial progress been made since Aristotle's time. In all else he lifted knowledge and speculation on to a higher plane and filled the minds of men with the feeling that they had entered upon a larger heritage and were breathing a keener air. The Church is always, and quite naturally, alarmed when the intellectual basis of thought shifts. In A.D. 1210, A.D. 1215, and A.D. 1231, provincial or papal interdicts forbade the professors at Paris to lecture on Aristotle. Official Christianity seemed to be attempting to repeat the process by which official Islam had twice throttled Aristotelianism. The attempt, however, failed. Lectures on Aristotle were still delivered, and the last condemnation, that of Gregory IX., in A.D. 1231, promised that a duly appointed commission should expunge the dangerous or pernicious matter from Aristotle's works, which might then be lectured on without offence.[1]

But the conditions in Christendom were very different from what they had been in Islam. The Arabian Aristotelians never seem to have been supported by a broad stream of the intellectual life around them, whereas the Christian Aristotelians were giving the intellect of Europe exactly what it craved for. And more important still, the Arab students of Aristotle had never been true enthusiasts for the orthodox creed of their church.

[1] On the whole question of the prohibitions, see Pierre Mandonnet, O.P., *Siger de Brabant*, vol. i., pp. 20 *sqq*. 2nd ed. Louvain, 1911.

Avicenna was far less heterodox than Averrhoes, but probably neither the one nor the other ever seriously complicated his own philosophical speculations by considering their bearing upon Islamite orthodoxy. Whereas the greatest of the Christian apostles of Aristotelianism were equally zealous for learning and for Christian dogma.

While thirsting for knowledge for its own sake they were at the same time devoted sons of the Church, and regarded her teaching as above all challenge even from philosophy. To such men devotion to the Church could not mean abstinence from the richest sources of information and the best guides to thought, nor could love of knowledge mean willingness to accept infidel conclusions. Naturally, then, there were theologians who supported the study of Aristotle, though there appear also to have been Aristotelians who thought it was no business of theirs to settle terms between philosophical truth and Christian orthodoxy. We naturally respect the mental independence of these latter and speak of them, very rightly, as in advance of their times. The curious may speculate as to the probable fates of secular learning and the ecclesiastical tradition had a direct conflict between the admirers of Aristotle and those of Peter Lombard torn the universities; but the actual course of history that led to Aquinas and Dante was determined at this crisis by a man who loved both Aristotle and Peter, and rendered whole-hearted

service both to philosophy and theology. That man was Albert of Cologne, well called the Great, though the origin of the title is uncertain. He was a man of prodigious intellectual versatility and energy. He travelled all over Christian Europe in various capacities, and collected information wherever he went. He was at one time Bishop of Ratisbon, much against his will. Many offices were pressed upon him, but he declined them all, and spent his long life in the pursuit of knowledge. During the greater part of the period in which he was engaged upon Aristotle he had to work on translations from the Arabic, no others being available. But long before he died Christian Europe had become alive to the fact that the authentic Greek text of Aristotle was perfectly accessible and lay close at their door in Constantinople. Albert lived to see Aristotle's works translated direct from the Greek, at the instigation of his great pupil Thomas Aquinas, of whom we shall speak in the next chapter. Albert, like Avicenna, covers the whole ground of Aristotle, working the material into independent treatises of his own. He does not give us a translation and a commentary on the *De Anima*, for instance, but he writes a treatise on the Soul, which is based on Aristotle modified by Arabian and other commentators. In one way or another he had access to a vast store of information as to the opinions of ancient and relatively modern authorities and he aims at anything but brevity.

As an interpreter he keeps closer to Aristotle than the Arabs do, although he is influenced powerfully by the natural affinity of the Christian mind to Platonism: for the Christian reader of Aristotle inevitably read Platonism into him, not for any purpose of reconciliation, but because his mind naturally moved on Platonic lines and, even when formally rejecting what were regarded as the specific beliefs of Plato, understood much in a Platonic sense that had not been so meant. Moreover, Avicenna and Averrhoes predisposed the student of Aristotle to find in his teaching not only a Platonism but a Neoplatonism which certainly was not there.

In his Aristotelian treatises Albert never professes to give his own opinion. He declares very emphatically that no one can tell what he himself thinks by reading these books, because he is merely an exponent of Aristotle and the group of thinkers who cluster round him and interpret him. No one has any right to criticise him, he declares, unless he can show him to be an unfaithful exponent of Aristotle and the peripatetics. This warning he repeats at the close of the group of Natural History treatises, and again at the end of the "Politics." And in the first chapter of the Second Tractate of his Eleventh Book of "Metaphysics," he expressly covers his exposition of the nature of the First Cause, and the relation of the First Cause to the immaterial beings that move the Heavens, by the

declaration:—"Now in these that follow no one is to suppose that we are saying anything as to our own opinion, any more than we have done in any one of the books on Nature. But we shall only expound the opinions of the peripatetics concerning these substances, leaving it to others to judge what truth or falsehood there may be in their assertions." The caution is particularly necessary here, for the opinions set forth as those of the peripatetics smack far too much of the Neoplatonic doctrines of emanation to fit the orthodox creed of Christianity. Indeed they are much too deeply tinged with Neoplatonic and Arabian doctrine to be even good Aristotelianism.

In making these special and general declarations, Albert was probably guarding himself against possible persecution or pressure from ecclesiastical quarters. But the points on which he was conscious of a positive dissent from Aristotle appear to have been but few. He seems to have been sufficiently explicit on these points to satisfy the Roman Curia. The commission appointed by the pope in A.D. 1231 had never sat or reported, but Albert, and Thomas after him, were apparently held to be acting within the spirit of the papal injunction, to have noted with a black mark those doctrines of Aristotle which would be hurtful to Christian faith, and to have counteracted the malign influence of Averrhoes in emphasising and exaggerating these anti-Christian doctrines and

drawing unwarranted and (as was supposed) un-Aristotelian deductions from them, such as the belief that the soul perished with the body.

Students of Albert's theological works declare that there is no systematic amalgamation between his philosophy and his theology. There is no precise definition of the relation of one to the other. The two run side by side, and naturally there are approximations and reactions between them, but it was left to S. Thomas Aquinas to make them warp and woof of a single web. And to him we must now turn, for we are ready to take a general survey of the material which he combined in the vast sweep of his synthesis; and so to understand the system which the student of Dante must always assume as the background of the poet's thought and diction.[1]

[1] In my account of Albert I am dependent, as to some points, upon Erdmann, §§ 199-201.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER III

Note to p. 59

Avicenna is not easily accessible except in the great libraries, and the reader may be glad to have the actual words of the Latin translation.[1] I have expanded the contractions and modernised the punctuation.

" Jam autem intellectum est quod natura generis est duobus modis. Aliquando enim est in intellectu, primo, et deinde existit in sensibilibus; et existit in multiplicitate extrinseca; sicut cum quis intelligit prius aliquid artificiale, et postea efficit illud in actu. Aliquando primo habet esse in sensibilibus, et deinde formatur in intellectu; sicut cum alicui contingit videre aliquos homines, et ex eis imprimitur forma humana in eo. Et omnino, aliquando forma intellecta est causa existendi in sensibilibus formas[2] que sunt in eis, et aliquando forme que habent esse in sensibilibus sunt causa aliquo modo essendi formam intellectivam, scilicet quod existit in intellectu postquam jam habuit esse in sensibilibus. Sed quia omnium que sunt comparatio ad deum et ad angelos est sicut comparatio artificialium que sunt apud nos ad animam artificem, ideo id quod est in sapientia creatoris et angelorum, et de veritate

[1] *Avicenne perhypatetici philosophi ac medicorum facile primi opera in lucem redacta ac nuper quantum ars niti potuit per canonicos emendata.* (Venice, 1508.) Logyce, Pars III. f. 12. v. a.

[2] The accusative, here and lower down, is obviously due to a close following of the Arabic idiom, in which the verb substantive is followed by the objective case.

cogniti et comprehensi ex rebus naturalibus, habet esse ante multitudinem; quicquid autem intelligitur de illis est aliqua intentio. Et deinde acquiritur esse eis quod est in multiplicitate, et cum sunt in multiplicitate non sunt unum ullo modo. In sensibilibus enim forinsecis non est aliquod commune nisi tantum discretio et dispersio. Deinde iterum habentur intelligentie apud nos postquam fuerint in multiplicitate. Hoc autem quod sunt ante multiplicitatem, et qualiter intelligentie sunt unius essentie, an et hoc multiplicatur propter illas, aut non, cuius similitudines existunt, hic noster tractatus non sufficit ad hoc, quia ad alium tractatum sapientie pertinet. Debes autem scire quod hoc quod dicimus de genere exemplum est speciei et differentie et proprietatis et accidentis. Quod deducet te ad viam comprehendendi qualiter haec sunt intellectualia et logica et naturalia, et quod ex eis est in multiplicitate, et ante, et post multiplicitatem."

One of the marginalia to this passage reads: "Tangit triplex esse universalis, scilicet ante rem, in re, et post rem."

Notes to pp. 62-67

Aquinas expressly defends the dogma of the unity of forms and the "immediateness" of the relation of even the most advanced "forms" to the ultimate "matter" in his treatise *De Pluralitate Formarum*. In the Parma edition of the *Opera Omnia* (1852-1873)[1] it is Opusculum xlii. Vol. 17, pp. 41-49.

[1] Cf. p. 94, *note*.

The doctrine of the unity of the substantial form there elaborated is constantly assumed (or concisely stated) in his other works, *e.g.*:

"Sed si anima intellectiva unitur corpori ut forma substantialis, sicut supra iam diximus, impossibile est quod aliqua alia forma substantialis praeter eam inveniatur in homine."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. lxxvi. art. 4, corp. And: "Forma ergo quae dat solum primum gradum perfectionis materiae, est imperfectissima: sed forma quae dat primum et secundum, et tertium, et sic deinceps, est perfectissima; et tamen materiae [sc. primae] immediata."—*Ibid.* ad tertium.

On the obscure point of the *accidentia* or *principia individuantia* Albertus Magnus declares that nothing in addition to the specific form is needed to constitute the individual "nisi materia et accidens individuans." (*Lib. de Praedicamentis.* Tract II., cap. 5.) And Aquinas says:

"Principium diversitatis individuorum ejusdem speciei est divisio materiae secundum quantitatem; forma enim hujus ignis a forma illius ignis non differt, nisi per hoc quod est in diversis partibus in quas materia dividitur."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 49. And: "Differentia autem quae ex forma procedit inducit diversitatem speciei; quae autem est ex materia inducit diversitatem secundum numerum."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 93. And: "Persona igitur, in quacumque natura, significat id quod est distinctum in natura illa: sicut in humana natura significat has carnes et haec ossa et hanc animam, quae sunt principia individuantia hominem."—*Sum. Theo.* I. qu. xxix. art. 4, corp. Compare the phrase: "Principiorum . . . indi-

viduantium, quae sunt principia materialia."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 100, and the passages *Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xiv. art. 11, ad primum, quoted on p. 179.

On the theory of the "disposition" of matter and its effect on individuality, Thomas throws light when he says: "Actiones corporum caelestium diversimode recipiuntur in inferioribus corporibus secundum diversam materiae dispositionem. Contingit autem quandoque quod materia conceptus humani non est disposita totaliter ad masculinum sexum; unde partim formatur in masculum, partim in feminam. Unde ad hoc introducitur ab Augustino, ad repellendum scilicet divinationem quae fit per astra: quia effectus astrorum variantur etiam in rebus corporeis, secundum diversam materiae dispositionem."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. cv. art. 3, ad quartum.

Compare *Paradiso*, xiii. 67 *sqq.*, and many other passages.

On the non-existence of formless *prima materia*, in itself, compare: "Materia sine forma esse non potest."—*Sum. Theol.* III. qu. lxxv. art. 3, corp.

"Materia autem prima non potest praefuisse per seipsam ante omnia corpora formata, cum non sit nisi potentia tantum. Omne enim esse in actu est ab aliqua forma."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 43.

"Materia prima non existit in rerum natura per seipsam, cum non sit ens in actu, sed potentia tantum: unde magis est aliquid concreatum, quam creatum."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. vii. art. 2, ad tertium.

"Dicere igitur materiam praecedere sine forma, est dicere ens actu sine actu: quod implicat

contradictionem. . . . Unde oportet dicere quod materia prima neque fuit creata omnino sine forma, neque sub forma una communi, sed sub formis distinctis."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. lxvi. art. 1, corp.

"Ratio illa probat, quod materia prima per se non creatur."—*De Pot.* qu. iii. art. 5, ad tertium.

And on its unknowableness, in itself, even by God:

"Sed quia nos ponimus materiam creatam a Deo, non tamen sine forma, habet quidem materia ideam in Deo, non tamen aliam ab idea compositi. Nam materia secundum se neque esse habet, neque cognoscibilis est."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xv. art. 3, ad tertium.

And again, in dealing with the question whether Christ knew "infinita," Aquinas says: "Alio modo dicitur infinitum secundum potentiam materiae. Quod quidem dicitur privative: ex hoc scilicet quod non habet formam quam natum est habere. Et per hunc modum dicitur infinitum in quantitate. Tale autem infinitum ex sui ratione est ignotum: quia scilicet est quasi materia cum privatione formae, ut dicitur in III. *Physic.*; omnis autem cognitio est per formam vel actum. Sic igitur, si huiusmodi infinitum cognosci debeat secundum modum ipsius cogniti, impossibile est quod cognoscatur."—*Sum. Theol.* III. qu. x. art. 3, ad primum.

Light falls on the subject by a comparison with the doctrine that *evil*, having no positive existence, cannot be known "in itself" even by God: "Sed malum non cognoscitur a Deo per ipsum: quia sic oporteret quod malum esset in Deo; oportet enim cognitum esse in cognoscente. . . . Ad quartum dicendum quod cognoscere aliquid per

aliud tantum, est imperfectae cognitionis, si illud sit cognoscibile per se. Sed malum non est per se cognoscibile: quia de ratione mali est, quod sit privatio boni. Et sic neque definiri, neque cognosci potest, nisi per bonum."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xiv. art. 10, 4 and *ad quartum.*

Notes to p. 68

"Deus non intelligit res secundum ideam extra se existentem. Et sic etiam Aristoteles improbat opinionem Platonis de ideis, secundum quod ponebat eas per se existentes, non in intellectu." —*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xv. art. 1, ad primum. And: "Plato enim posuit omnium rerum species separatas; et quod ab eis individua denominatur, quasi species separatas participando; ut puta quod Socrates dicitur homo secundum ideam hominis separatam. Et sicut ponebat ideam hominis et equi separatam, quam vocebat *per se hominem* et *per se equum*, ita ponebat ideam entis et ideam unius separatam, quam dicebat *per se ens* et *per se unum:* et eius participatione unumquodque dicitur ens vel unum. Hoc autem quod est per se ens et per se unum, ponebat esse summum bonum. Et quia bonum convertitur cum ente, sicut et unum, ipsum per se bonum dicebat esse Deum, a quo omnia dicuntur bona per modum participationis.—Et quamvis haec opinio irrationabilis videatur quantum ad hoc, quod ponebat species rerum naturalium separatas per se subsistentes, ut Aristoteles multipliciter probat; tamen hoc absolute verum est,

quod aliquid est primum, quod per suam essentiam est ens et bonum, quod dicimus Deum, ut ex superioribus patet. Huic etiam sententiae concordat Aristoteles."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. vi. art. 4, corp.

Compare *Purgatorio*, xvii. 109 *sq.*

CHAPTER IV

S. THOMAS AQUINAS

VERY near the heart of the religion of Aquinas lay the substance of the Neoplatonic mysticism, negative indeed in verbal expression, but positive in the unifying intensity of its spiritual perception and experience. In its purity, as exemplified for example in Scotus Eriugena, this Neoplatonic religion was frankly pantheistic and emanational, but Thomas qualified it by a pronounced and definite theism that distinguished God from his creatures with perfect precision. He emphasised this by insisting on the doctrine of creation "out of nothing," which means specifically that God did not evolve the created world out of his own substance. It is, therefore, a formal denial of Pantheism and the doctrine of emanations. Nevertheless the fundamental theorem of the "negative" theology, and the form of mysticism associated with it, retain their vitality in the mind of Thomas, and pervade both his thought and feeling. Side by side with this is the whole body of Christian or ecclesiastical dogma, as it had grown up through the centuries, and had been systematised, hardened, and one might almost say codified, in the twelfth

century. And running through all are the tenderness and fervour of Hebrew piety and the flame of Christian charity, with a self-renunciation ever verging towards asceticism, and the self-prostration of humility driven to the furthest limit.

And all this was to be thrown into the rigid forms of Aristotelian logic and metaphysic—rigid sometimes in themselves, and sometimes (where they were naturally fluid) hardened by the reaction of the Christian and Platonic search for the Absolute. And note especially that within this synthesis terms must be found on which Christian ideals of character and conduct could live at peace with the essentially Hellenic conceptions—ethical, sociological, and scientific—which had burst upon the Western world with a strength not to be ignored or resisted in the great treatises of Aristotle on the nature, conduct, and institutions of man.

It is true that many of these seemingly conflicting elements had been at least indirectly reacting upon each other throughout the whole course of the Christian centuries. And it is also true, more especially, that Albertus Magnus had played the David to Thomas's Solomon, hewing the stones and gathering the material, out of which the temple must be built. But nothing can derogate from the stupendous nature of the task with which Thomas was faced, or qualify our admiration of the mastery with which he accomplished it. He developed, with so sure a touch, the tentative solutions and

harmonisings that he inherited, and detected and precipitated the latent possibilities that the situation held in solution with such infallible instinct, that, in spite of opposition and dispute, his utterances were felt, almost from the first, to have a certain quality of conclusiveness that makes him not only the most representative of the Schoolmen, but, after Augustine, the most influential theologian of the Western Church.

There is a characteristic story which every one has heard, though for the most part in sadly mutilated forms. It tells how when Thomas was studying under Albertus Magnus he never spoke; and his fellow-students (note the broad bovine face, which artistic tradition has faithfully preserved) nicknamed him "the dumb ox." One of them, feeling compassion for his stupid taciturnity, goodnaturedly offered once to go over the lecture they had just heard with him to explain its drift. Thomas accepted the offer with gratitude. So the student began to take up the points of the lecture, one by one, until he stuck. On which Thomas not only gave him the link, but gave it him enriched by illustrations and combinations with other matter, from the stores of his own mind. The student (very tactfully) expressed no surprise, and paid no awkward compliments, but treated his own task as finished, and saying that one good turn deserved another, asked Thomas to go over the next lecture to him. Thomas assented, but stipu-

lated that he must not tell any one else. But the other thought so great treasures should not lie hidden, and informed the superintendent of studies of what was going on. Meanwhile another student had found some of Thomas's notes, and had shown them to Albertus Magnus, to whom the superintendent of studies now brought this extra news. Albert told the superintendent to enjoin upon Thomas "in the name of obedience" the defence of a certain pretty stiff thesis. Thomas threw himself into prayer until the time approached, and then defended the thesis with such convincing lucidity that the superintendent said to him, "Nay, Brother Thomas, you speak not as one who is putting his opinion, but as one who is summing up and giving a verdict." [1] It appears that it was improper for a student to present a case as though he were saying the last word, rather than submitting the material for his lecturer to pronounce on. It was as though the barrister were to assume the place of the judge. But Thomas humbly pleaded that he had not been able to arrange the material in any other way. Then the superintendent, taking up the thesis, produced four redoubtable counter arguments, which he thought would show the young scholar his place. But Thomas instantly refuted them, with perfect conclusiveness. Then Albert himself cried, "And this

[1] Frater Thoma, tu non videris tenere locum respondentis, sed determinantis. Cf. the disputed passage, *Paradiso*, xxiv. 48.

is the man we have nicknamed the dumb ox. I tell you all the world will re-echo to the instruction of his lowing." [1]

There could not be a finer statement of the fact. S. Thomas struck the acoustic note, which was returned and magnified, not broken and dispersed, by everything against which it struck. When this ox lowed all Europe echoed.

We shall return to this story once more when we have attempted the rough survey of the scope and nature of the work of Aquinas to which we must now proceed. Thomas came of the noble family of the counts of Aquino, on the northern boundary of the old kingdom of Naples. As to the date of his birth there is a slight uncertainty.[2] He died in 1274 (the year in which Dante met Beatrice and entered his " New Life ") at the age of forty-eight or fifty, and his three great synthetic works may be thought of, the first as completed before his thirtieth and the second as completed before his fortieth year. The third was still incomplete at the date of his death. His literary activity, then, extended over some twenty years, during which he produced a body of work which seems almost

[1] Ipse adhuc talem dabit in doctrina mugitum, quod in toto mundo sonabit. Compare Dante's phrase in Ep. vii. 65-67, ut bos noster evangelizans, accensus ignis aeterni flamma, remugit.

[2] For details as to S. Thomas's life and the chronology of his works see *Vita S. Thomæ Aquinatis*, auctore Guilielmo de Thoco. In the *Acta Sanctorum*, Martii Tom. Prim. pp. 657 *sqq.*; and the *Dissertationes* of Bernardus de Rubeis, which are given in the collected editions of Thomas's works.

fabulous. The first of the three great works just referred to is his enormous Commentary on the "Sentences" of Petrus Lombardus. This book represents his first period of activity as a theological lecturer in Paris. It rivals the more celebrated *Summa Theologica* in bulk; and though it is Thomas's earliest work, and though he found occasion to correct and modify his conclusions on several details when he had reached a greater maturity and independence of thought, it is of particular interest to the Dante student, because, as we shall see, it contains the only elaborate treatment of the state of souls after death and of the final consummation which we possess from the great theologian's hand.[1] During the years that follow he was generally either in Italy (Rome or Naples) or in Paris. When in the former country he was requested by the Spaniard Raymond of Pinnaforte, the General of the Dominican Order (and himself a great scholar and missionary, devoted to the conversion of Saracens and Jews), to write a treatise which should particularly appeal to those who, like the Jews in part, or like the Saracens in totality, denied the authenticity of the revelation contained in the Christian Scriptures. The work which Aquinas produced in answer to this request, the *Contra Gentiles* or *Summa Philosophica*, is much the smallest of his three great synthetic works, but nevertheless, from many points of view,

[1] See p. 94.

it is by far the most important. For in all his other works Aquinas, appealing only to Christians who were in agreement with him on all fundamental points, assumes his essential basis. And thus it is only incidentally that he throws light on the ultimate foundations of his belief, or answers the insistent questions of the modern inquirer as to the grounds on which he accepts the premises from which he often draws such stupendous or appalling conclusions. When he has to face the Saracens and the Jews, he is compelled to start from the ground common to all mankind, to determine with perfect precision the relation of reason to revelation, and to construct the bridge by which he must induce the philosopher, at the prompting of reason itself, to cross over into the region of faith.

The Prologue to the *Summa Theologica*, the third and most celebrated of the three leading works of Aquinas, has often raised a smile.

> " Inasmuch as the teacher of Catholic truth ought not only to instruct advanced students, but also to teach beginners, according to that of the Apostle, 1 Corinthians, iii., ' as unto babes in Christ I have fed you with milk and not with meat,' we have set before us the purpose in this work to treat such things as belong to the Christian religion after the fashion suited to the training of beginners.
>
> " For we have considered that novices in this learning have been much impeded in the treatises which have been written by sundry, partly because of the multiplication of superfluous discussions, articles, and

> arguments, partly, too, because the things needful for such to know are not handled after the order of the study itself, but after the demands of the text-books expounded, or the opportunities of debate; and partly because of the lassitude and bewilderment bred in the mind of the hearers by constant repetition of the same things. Seeking then to avoid these and the like faults, we shall try, relying on divine aid, to follow out the things that pertain to sacred doctrine with such brevity and lucidity as the subject-matter allows."

There is much virtue in that "as the subject-matter allows"! And under this shield I think one might undertake to defend the claim to "brevity" of the four double-column folio volumes of the still uncompleted work, and even (crouching very carefully behind the shield this time) to champion the "lucidity" of the sections on the doctrine of the Trinity!

On the representative and influential nature of this great work no word need be said, and the most casual student of the commentaries on Dante must be aware of its value as a quarry for illustrations and explanations of the text of the "Comedy."

Some time before his death, as Aquinas was celebrating mass in Naples, he had a wonderful spiritual experience. The nature of it is not detailed; but the result of it was that he put his ink-horn and writing materials upon a shelf and never wrote or dictated another word of his *Summa*. "My writing days are over, for such

things have been revealed to me that all I have written and taught seems of but small account to me, wherefore I hope in my God that, even as the end has come to my teaching, so it may soon come to my life," he afterwards said to his " companion." The *Summa* breaks off in the middle of the sacrament of Penitence, and therefore leaves out the sacraments of Extreme Unction, Ordination, and Matrimony, and the whole doctrine of the final state. Subsequent editors have made up the defect as best they might by adding a supplement, the form of which is dictated by the lines already laid down by Thomas in earlier divisions of his subject-matter, and the substance of which is drawn from the Commentary on the Fourth Book of the " Sentences." And since the *Contra Gentiles* only treats these themes in a very summary fashion, the student of Dante is tantalised by not having Thomas's maturest thought on the subjects most closely and directly connected with the literal theme of the " Comedy." But it would be ungrateful to complain when we have so rich a storehouse of illustration and comparison as is furnished by the Commentary on the " Sentences."

The three treatises now mentioned fill seven only of the twenty-five folio volumes of S. Thomas's complete works in the Parma edition of 1852-1873.[1] The remaining volumes include commentaries on

[1] Quotations are taken from this edition, except in the case of the *Summa Theologica*, where the edition issued at Rome, *Jussu impensaque*, Leonis xiii. P.M., in 1888-1906, has been followed.

a great part of Aristotle's works, at which Aquinas laboured with his friend William of Moerbeke, who made a fresh translation direct from the Greek for his special use, and with whom he had evidently discussed many points of difficulty or ambiguity, acquiring the knowledge of many technical terms in Greek, though he never appears to have learned enough of the language to read the original by himself. Some of his commentaries are incomplete, and he omits the whole of that vast body of natural history which Albert had treated at great length, and (so those who are in a position to form an opinion tell us) with originality as well as learning. But even with these limitations, Aquinas's work on Aristotle fills four more of the folio volumes. Further, he composed a number of commentaries on books of the Old and New Testaments (filling some three volumes): and commentaries on such works as Boethius on the Trinity, the pseudo Dionysius-Areopagita on the Divine Names, and that strange work, apparently of some Jewish mystic, known as the *De Causis*. We have also extensive works on such special questions as Truth, Power, Evil, the Soul, and so forth: and a great body of philosophical and theological *Opuscula*, some of which deal searchingly with fundamental questions which are only incidentally treated in the more comprehensive works. There are also a certain number of treatises of direct edification or devotion.

Allowing for the space occupied by the texts commented upon, and by editorial matter, and for doubtful or spurious works, we shall perhaps not be far out if we reduce the twenty-five volumes to twenty double-column folios of some five hundred pages each. This gives one such volume per annum for the whole period of Thomas's literary career. I am very far indeed from professing to have covered the whole of this stupendous mass of work, but the continuous and careful study of thousands of pages of it and frequent consultations of the volumes up and down, during many years, have left me with the vivid impression that in the whole of this output the cutting edge of Thomas's mind is never to be found blunted. His whole material is always under command. Whatever he says on any subject he says in relation to his thought on every other subject. I may add that a few attempts at translation will be enough to teach any competent student to appreciate the condensed precision of the thought and the pregnant felicity of diction that characterise this great writer.[1]

No one will expect a summary in this place of the twenty or so volumes, but I must make some attempt to trace a few of the lines that are most important for our special purpose. To begin with the relation of reason to revelation. On this

[1] "Cujus ingenii subtilitatem, acumen intelligentiæ, et velocitatem definitivam judicii satis ostendit multitudo librorum," etc.—*William of Tocco.*

matter, which is dealt with most expressly and fully in the *Contra Gentiles*, Thomas's view is perfectly precise. He had before him in the works of Aristotle not indeed a body of reasoned and systematised conclusions that he could accept on authority (for both he and his master Albert are emphatic in their repudiation of the idea that an equation can be assumed or established between the opinion of Aristotle and philosophic truth, and clear in their assertion that on certain points Aristotle's teaching was erroneous and dangerous), but still an accepted method and canons of reasoning and investigation, and a cyclopædia of systematised science and philosophy. This put him in possession of a body of philosophical conclusions based on reason, parallel to the body of ecclesiastical dogma based on revelation. The question of the relation of reason to revelation, therefore, acquired a definite and concrete meaning, and had to deal with a defined material, in a sense which could hardly have been asserted at any much earlier period. Of previous teachers (who had no recognised *corpus philosophicum* to support them in their independent work), Anselm (*c.* 1033-1109 A.D.) had taken up the clearest position, in his assertion that even such mysteries as the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation were in principle accessible to the reason, though not subject to its verdict as to their truth or falsehood. If human reason could not as a fact reach them unaided by revelation, it was not that

they were essentially inaccessible to it, but because it was too weak to reach them in its own strength, though it ought to be able to see that they are indeed demanded by its own principles when once they have been established: just as the student, incapable of working out original theorems in mathematics (the illustration is not his), nevertheless possesses the faculty by which they may be worked out, and should be capable of understanding the truths that he could not have reached independently.

But this is not the position of Aquinas. He declares emphatically that there are certain truths of revelation which are inherently inaccessible to reason, and amongst them is this very doctrine of the Trinity itself, of which Anselm endeavoured to prove the inherent rationality. Further, the truth that the material universe is not only a divine creation but a creation that is not to be regarded as an eternal act of God (like the eternal generation of the Son within the Trinity) is a matter incapable of demonstration, but a vital point of Christian faith. Moreover, it is very important to keep in mind this fact of the inaccessibility to reason of certain truths, and that no man should claim to have proved these mysterious doctrines. And that for two reasons: firstly, because it is derogatory to the dignity of these ultimate doctrines of the Christian faith to represent them as coming within the range of reason; and, secondly, because if we

say that we have proved them we shall give occasion to the unbeliever to scoff; for, observing the weakness of our demonstrations, and assuming that they are the actual foundations on which the articles of our faith rest, he will despise and reject these articles of faith themselves as at best mere inadequately supported opinions. Our reasonings, then, may comfort and please the believer by showing him that he need not accept these doctrines as blankly unintelligible facts, imposed upon him by authority, but may see some kind of meaning in them, and may trace a relation at least between the processes of his own reasoning and the facts of ultimate truth. But he must be exceedingly careful to remember that at best these arguments can only raise presumptions, and can never amount to a proof of the core of revealed truth. They must never be put forward for anything more than they are.

So strongly does Aquinas feel this that, when he has given a series of exceedingly powerful and moving arguments against the doctrine of eternal creation, instead of resting in his conclusions he proceeds expressly and elaborately to demonstrate that his arguments are not conclusive, so that our ultimate faith in the truth about creation must rest on the authority of Scripture.[1]

But if reason cannot attain to the highest of revealed truths, so that arguments in support of

[1] *Contra Gentiles*, ii. 38.

such truths cannot be conclusive, it is also and *a fortiori* true that arguments against them cannot be conclusive either. Thus there can be no conclusive ground for rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, or the doctrine of Transubstantiation even, in the court of pure reason, were there no appeal from it. It may indeed be shown that they present extreme difficulties to human reason, but it cannot be conclusively shown that they are essentially irrational. For reason is the power given to man for the ascertaining of truth, and, as we shall see, the ultimate appeal for accepting the very revelation which supersedes reason must be made to reason itself. Now it is inconceivable that God should not only have left the human mind incapable of reaching the supremely important truth, but should also have positively put a garrison in it to hold the fort against the truth. Truth, therefore, is of two kinds: that which is attainable by reason, and that which, though not attainable by it, is not inconsistent with it.[1] This latter branch of truth, however, does not cover the whole revelation. For there is a large area of coincidence between the dictates of reason and the dictates of revelation, since revelation assures us of many truths, such as the existence and the goodness of God, the immortality of the human soul, and much more, which are capable of conclusive demonstration by and to the human reason also. And this

[1] *Contra Gentiles*, i. 7.

is because the tender mercy of God, in consideration of the dullness of many human minds which are incapable of high philosophical thought, in consideration of the many and necessary businesses of the world which preclude many men from the long course of subsidiary study needful as a basis of philosophical speculation, and in consideration of the confusion which might result from the disputes and cavils of the experts, has embraced under the authority of revelation much more than the ultimate mysteries that could not otherwise be known, and has thus secured for the plain man an assurance and a facility and economy of effort, but for which he might have been bewildered and lost even on the domain of reason itself.[1]

But whence comes our assurance of the authenticity of revelation? Nakedly the answer is given in the sixth chapter of the *Contra Gentiles*, Bk. I. The miracles which accompanied the proclamation of the Gospel are the divine authentification of its truth. And if you urge that the only testimony to the actuality of the miracles themselves is borne by the very men whose message they are called in to authenticate, the answer is that if these simple and unlearned men, urging a doctrine which ran directly counter to all the demands of carnal man, had succeeded in refuting and converting all the wisdom of this world against the whole influence of secular power, that would have constituted a

[1] *Contra Gentiles*, i. 4; cf. *Convivio*, i. 1, and pp. 130 *sqq*.

greater miracle than all the miracles recorded in the Scriptures.[1] But this formal demonstration is supplemented by a series of beautiful and eloquent chapters in the Third Book of the same treatise, in which the author argues that the demand of human nature for ultimate blessedness contains within itself its own promise and guarantee of fulfilment. And on examination we find that that blessedness can only consist in the satisfaction of our yearning for full and perfect truth, for the knowledge of the inmost core and reality of things, the unifying vision of the Supreme Power, not in its divergent effects but in its central essence, so that we may see all things from the inside and from the centre, not from the outside and from the circumference—in a word, the absolute vision of God. Nothing short of this can fulfil the promise inherent in our own nature. Yet nothing that this world or that human reason offers can enable us to attain it. The highest blessedness that this life can afford, above all the objects of worldly ambition and the satisfactions of worldly appetite, is that degree of converse with the ultimate truth to which our unaided faculties can raise us and which Aristotle spoke of as the contemplative life. But this can only bring us a little way towards the knowledge of God; and the human faculties that have carried us so far imperatively demand an extension of vision beyond this point. They demand an en-

[1] This chapter is paraphrased by Dante in *Paradiso*, xxiv.

lightenment which they cannot themselves give or get. In other words, they demand a divine revelation. In answer to this demand comes the well-authenticated revelation of the Scriptures. No other claimant (notably not the Koran) can rival their credentials.

Reason, then, has led us to expect a revelation, which, while going out to meet, to support, and to guide it on its own ground, should proceed to carry it beyond it. Even revelation, however, while giving knowledge of the Divine Being far exceeding that which unaided human reason could attain, does not enable us to see God in his essence. But we receive the assurance of fuller powers in the life to come, and there at last we shall see God, not in his manifestations and revelations but in himself, not in his effects but in his essence.

It will now be clear that the task of the Christian philosopher is fourfold. He must (1) apply human reason to the problems of religion and carry it to all the conclusions it can reach. In performing this part of his task, unless he is addressing the faithful, he may only use Scripture to illustrate and enforce, not to prove his conclusions. But it is also part of the function of human reason (2) to show the need of a Revelation and to test and prove the claims of the Scriptures to be the Revelation needed. When he has established this (or when he is addressing those that already accept it), the Christian philosopher's further task is to show

that the revealed truths he proclaims, in the first place, (3) really are vouched by Scripture and, in the second place, (4) are not contradicted by reason.

In arriving at this scheme we have already dealt with the second branch (2). The last (4) we shall have to leave with no more than such incidental illustration as it may receive by the way. In principle it is clear enough. Its application would lead us into the severest and perhaps the least satisfying portions of the argumentation of Aquinas. But something remains to be said on points (1) and (3).

(1) For the range of theological truth accessible to reason Aquinas claims much, though he is an uncompromising upholder of the negative theology. We can prove the existence of a first-mover and first-cause; but we can assert nothing positive of him that is absolutely true. Only negations can be true without qualification. And Thomas can tell us why. Whenever you give a positive account of anything, you do it by starting from that which it has in common with other things, and then giving it some distinctive attribute which separates it from the rest. For instance, if you take living things. They are the things which are distinguished from others by possessing the power of assimilation and reproduction. Then if you want to distinguish animals in the narrower sense from vegetables, you must do so by assigning to them the attributes of sense-perception, and perhaps

locomotion. And again if you wish to distinguish men from animals, you do so by giving them the attribute of reason. Now God does not belong to any kind or class at all. And therefore it is impossible to " distinguish " God from that which is not God by positive definition. We can only relate him to other things negatively by saying that he is not anything that they are. So we begin by saying, for example, that God is not material and that God is not subject to force or pressure or modification by anything other than himself. But we are not left entirely to these negations, though they alone are absolutely true. We can assert that God is good, for instance, and that he is just. But in what sense? If we assert anything whatever both of man and of God it is obvious that we cannot be using words in a uniform sense, or (to employ the technical term) " univocally." But still less are we speaking merely " equivocally," as when we call a picture of a man a man, or when we speak of the back of a bench, the back of a wall, the back of a horse, and the back of a carriage. Nor yet is it a mere metaphor to call God good or just, as it is to call him the " Sun " of our souls. What is it, then? It is " analogical." You may call a man's secretions " healthy " if they show that he is in good health, or you may call exercise " healthy " because it makes him healthy; but it is only the man himself that is really and literally healthy. The others are only so " analogically."

Taking goodness and justice (as we must) in their human sense, we can only say that God is good or just analogically, meaning that he is the source of all goodness and justice. But there is this great difference. Health is primarily in the man, and anything else is called healthy because of its relation to the health of the man. And since the man is directly accessible to us, we can get directly to the primary and determining norm of health. Whereas in the analogies which we use in speaking of God it is the goodness or justice of God (that is to say his essence or being) that is primary, and a man is good or just merely in virtue of his relation to the primary goodness or justice. So in these things we can only infer the prime norm and get knowledge of it through its effects; whereas in the case of health we have direct access to the norm and can gauge the derivatives by it.[1]

In sum, when we say that God is good, we mean in the first place that he is the source and goal, the sustainer and inspirer of all that we feel and know of goodness, and in the second place that goodness derives all its meaning, power, and loveliness from some as yet imperfectly understood relation to him, the full revelation of which will interpret, complete, and transfigure it. All men desire blessedness, and as we feel our way towards the true blessedness, whether by reason alone or aided by revelation, we feel more and more surely that blessedness

[1] Cf. *Paradiso*, xix. 86-90.

is only to be found in communion with the central reality and primal cause that we call God. As we know more he is more and more felt as the all-concentrating object of love and desire. And what else is the *Summum Bonum* but the supreme object of enlightened and purified love and longing here, and love and fruition hereafter?

We must not follow Aquinas further in his teachings as to creation (which include a fairly developed doctrine of angelic beings, and an exposition of the sense in which all things resemble God in their degree, though we have learned that God is nothing that they are), for we must pass on to the remaining branch (3) of the Christian philosopher's task.

Aquinas is explicit in his unqualified statement that it is the authority of Scripture that proves the truth of revealed doctrine. But he nowhere, as far as I am aware, says that it is the Christian philosopher's task to *deduce* these truths from Scripture. He must indeed *prove* that they are Scriptural, but he seems to have them in his possession already, and to know both that they are true and that they are Scriptural. Whence does he get them? I have nowhere found the answer to this question stated in the express, systematic, consecutive, and lucid fashion that has enabled us to advance so confidently hitherto in tracing the foundations of S. Thomas's system. Yet the answer is not doubtful. The whole system of currently accepted dogma, which Aquinas regarded as having the sanction of

the Church, is practically taken as constituting the body of truths that, whether above the *range* of reason or not, are at any rate placed above the *challenge* of reason by divine authentification, and which are to be proved by Scripture. The Scriptural proof itself often strikes the reader as perfunctory. There is obviously some determining influence behind it. Texts are cited in support of objections as well as in support of the opinion finally adopted; and which texts are to be explained, or explained away, is clearly not left to mere natural exegesis. The leading authority cited to indicate the direction that the argument is to take, though often drawn from Scripture, may equally well be drawn from one of the Fathers or Aristotle. Sometimes (though not so often as might be supposed) it comes from creed, liturgy, or ecclesiastical dogma. *A reductio ad haereticum* is the full equivalent of a *reductio ad absurdum*. And *quod est haereticum* whenever it appears is conclusive.

What is the relation then between the authority of the Church which is *accepted* and the authority of the Scripture which is *asserted* as the basis of the articles of faith? Obviously in the first instance we are to conceive that Scripture itself nominates the Church as its own interpreter. Such an authoritative interpreter is manifestly needed to determine when scriptural expressions are to be taken metaphorically and when literally; or when the language used conveys the ultimate truth, and when it

expresses only so much of it as the rude hearers to whom it was originally addressed would be able to appreciate. Authority to deal with such questions as these is obviously included in the promise of Christ to his disciples that the spirit of truth should guide them into all truth. Thus the validity of the deliberate utterances of the Church is guaranteed. And in one of his less known works at any rate Aquinas definitely asserts that no man's interpretation of Scripture, however well he may be qualified, can be taken against the judgment of the universal Church. The truths of faith are proved by Scripture, but the Church declares what the truths that Scripture proves are! It remains for the theologian to point out how it proves them. Before the Church has declared the truth, that is to say the mind of Scripture, on any point, a man may innocently arrive at and even defend and proclaim erroneous opinions. He may teach heresy in the sense that he teaches what is subsequently known to be heretical. But if he had no such intention, and would have submitted had he known, he is not a heretic. Indeed many of the earlier doctors of the Church did as a fact use language which, had it been employed at a later time, when doctrine had been more closely defined, would have been objectionable and misleading, and such language must by no means be imitated now. These men were perfectly orthodox in intention and perhaps in their own actual thought also, only they did not

speak in the face of disputations raised by later heretics, which would give a suspicious look to their language if repeated at a later period.

Such points as we are now discussing may easily suggest that, if the Church has to declare what the utterances of Scripture really are, conditions may arise in which it is doubtful what the declarations of the Church herself really are. But this case also is provided for, for the pope is authorised to declare what the teaching of the Church is on any point on which her verdict appears doubtful.

We see, then, how the recognition of the authority of the Church need not impinge upon the exclusive authority of the Scriptures. But is this really all? Or are we to go further, and to declare that, as well as having the power to interpret Scripture, the Church is in possession of a continuous tradition extending beyond the express content of Scripture, on which she can draw as a source of revealed truth? If so we must read the declaration that the articles of faith are to be proved by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as subject to a tacit qualification. Now that there was such a tradition, handed on to the disciples by Christ, the contents of which are not recorded in the Scripture, is expressly asserted by Aquinas, and appeal is more than once made to it. But so far as I have observed this is always in matters of practice, never in matters strictly of doctrine. The practice of the Church is of more authority than the opinions of all

the doctors; and on such a matter as whether it is right violently to seize the children of heretics or unbelievers and to baptise them in defiance of parental authority, in favour of which very much might be urged, the negative practice of the Church, whenever she has been in a position to do such things if she chose, is conclusive. So far then as saving *truth* is concerned, I have noted no passage in Aquinas which requires that we should go beyond the doctrine that the Church is the authorised expounder of the mind of Scripture.[1] But it should be noted that this is all a matter of constructive inference, Aquinas having nowhere, that I know of, expressly dealt with the matter. We must therefore leave it that he asserts without qualification that the Scripture is the basis on which the articles of faith rest, and at the same time accepts everything which he regards as authenticated Church doctrine without going behind it. He estimates the weight and significance of Scripture passages by their harmony with the Church doctrine and does not try Church doctrine itself by submitting it to any independent estimate of his own of the weight and balance of Scriptural evidence.[2]

Such are the principles on which S. Thomas relies and such the main lines on which he moves in his stupendous task of bringing into harmonious

[1] Cf. *De Monarchia*, iii. 3: 75 *sqq.*

[2] For a selection of the passages on which this account rests, see pp. 119 *sqq.*

relations, and welding into a compact system, the elements of thought, aspiration, ethical principle, spiritual passion, scriptural and ecclesiastical tradition and philosophical authority, of which his works are the synthesis.

All that I can further attempt is to indicate briefly a few outstanding impressions of the characteristic qualities of Thomas's mind. Something has already been said of his never-dulled intellectual keenness. No less striking is his unflinching honesty. He is so certain of his ultimate ground of faith that he is never afraid of putting the opinions he is combating on their very strongest ground. Again and again we read with amazement his concise and forceful expression of objections, against which he perhaps has nothing equally clear and penetrating to urge. It is true that he often puts up a man of straw, but never if he knows of a man of iron that can be put in the same place. We see throughout that he feels personally responsible for concealing nothing and for disguising nothing, whereas the issue of the battle, which is " not his but God's," does not really depend on his skill in fence. It rests upon a rock. He must declare the truth wherever he knows it, and declare without flinching all that can be said against it. Then he must say what he can in its support, and if it chances that what he can say is imperfect or even weak he can leave it, in full confidence in its own strength.

For further characterisation we may go back to the story of the "dumb ox". It reveals to us the scholar who could immediately assimilate everything that was set before him. He himself in later years confessed to a friend that he had never had a book in his hands, the contents of which he had not been able to master. And with him mastering a book meant bringing it into relation with everything that was already in his mind. Hence the characteristic touch in the story that when he supplied his fellow-student with the missing point in the lecture, he supplied it illustrated and supported by what had been already in his own mind. In later life, we learn, when he was dictating it was as if everything was in perfect form and order in his mind. He could dictate to three or four secretaries at once, and on one occasion, when he dropped asleep, he dictated still with perfect coherence! The certainty and firmness of his treatment of the vast variety of subjects with which he deals is not the result of elaborate tentatives and rearrangement. His advance follows the spontaneous swing of his mind, and he plants each point in its true place with unfailing precision. Like the blameless painter he never makes a false stroke with his brush. This impression of perpetual alertness and readiness is particularly vivid when we are reading the treatises written as answers to sets of questions sent by friends. He could never be taken by surprise. We are also told (credibly

enough) that he was a most acceptable preacher to simple folk. He addressed them in his own provincial vernacular, which he had never shaken off, and on these occasions he put aside all subtle scholastic disputations and spoke only things useful and profitable to the common man.

There is one more characteristic touch in the "dumb ox" story. The statement that for the great trial to which he was called by Albert, he prepared himself not by study but by prayer, is entirely convincing. It was by concentration on the central truth that the orderliness of his mind was established and maintained. And if order and prayerfulness were its dominant characteristics its ultimate law was that of spiritual perception.

Perhaps some faint indication of the way in which the inner sense of the Christian saint guides the philosopher and theologian may be furnished by his treatment of the Beatitudes,[1] of which I will attempt a paraphrastic analysis rather than a translation.

In approaching the subject of the Beatitudes he has already shown how the virtues commended in the "Nicomachean Ethics" may be carried over the boundaries of natural ethics into the region of the Christian graces by the Gifts of the Spirit; and the special questions now under discussion are whether the blessings pronounced in the Beatitudes refer to this life or the life to come, and whether the

[1] *Summa Theologica*, II. i. qu. lxix.

Beatitudes themselves are arranged in fitting order. With reference to the first point we are to consider that the ultimate blessedness, which consists in the unimpeded vision of God (the promise of which is repeated in various forms in every one of the blessings), is in its nature not fully attainable except in heaven. On the other hand, the mere hope of good is itself a good, and those that hope for the final fruition of the Divine Aspect already in a sense enjoy the promise. It is clear then that the blessing in its completeness can only refer to the future life, but that in some incipient measure it refers to this life also; and the question narrows itself to *how far* the blessing of heaven is anticipated on earth by the poor in spirit, the meek, the mourners,[1] and so forth, on whom that blessing is pronounced. For the promise of the full fruit of the tree contained in its leaves is different from that contained in the first formation of the fruit itself. Is it then only on the analogy of the leaves, or rather on the analogy of the half-formed fruit, that the blessing of heaven is anticipated on earth? To answer this question we must note the nature of the respective merits, that is to say, the virtues, exalted by Gifts of the Spirit, upon which the repeated blessing is pronounced; and also the

[1] Note that in the Vulgate our order of the mourners and the meek (Matthew v. 4, 5) is reversed, in harmony with the "ancient authorities" cited in the margin of the revised English version. This must be borne in mind in the sequel.

various conceptions that have been held of blessedness itself.

Now this blessedness has been sought by some in the life of indulgence of earthly impulses and desires, by some in the life of active beneficence, and by some in the life of contemplation. The first ideal is not so much imperfect as positively false, for the unrestrained pursuit of earthly grandeur and pleasure is an actual impediment to the true blessedness. The life of active beneficence, on the contrary, if it does not itself secure full blessedness, at least disposes and prepares the soul for it. But the contemplative life, even in its incipient and imperfect state on earth, is an anticipation and commencement of true blessedness, and in its perfect state in heaven it is the full blessedness itself. Thus in the progressive preparation for blessedness, which is itself a progressive anticipation of it, we must, to begin with, clear away the impediment of false earthly ideals. First come wealth and honours, which the ethical man pursues with due moderation, but which the Gift of the Spirit enables us utterly to contemn and trample upon. And so, *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, to wit the humble; for humility utterly spurns earthly wealth and honour.

And further the life of earthly pleasure or voluptuousness falsely seeks blessedness in obeying the promptings of impulse and in pursuing the means of indulgence. Now the ethical man restrains his

passionate impulses, but the Gift of the Spirit enables him utterly to eradicate them. *Blessed are the meek*, who have cast out passion.

Again the ethical man moderates his desire for every form of indulgence, but the Gift of the Spirit enables him rather to seek hardness and court suffering. *Blessed are they that mourn.*

And when in humility, gentleness, and resolute facing of hardships we have banished and overcome the false ideals that are an impediment to bliss, we may further merit blessedness and anticipate it by the active exercise of the beneficent life, rendering in the first place all that can be claimed by any man as his due, in which line the ethical man is rigidly just and righteous, whereas the Gift of the Spirit makes us not acquiesce in righteousness, but fall upon it as a hungry man falls upon his food. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.*

But active beneficence is not content only to meet all claims. It seeks spontaneously to express itself where there is no claim but only an opportunity. The ethical man exercises this beneficence to his friends or relatives. But we learn in the Gospel of S. Luke that it is just to those who can give us no return, and who are themselves least attractive to the carnal mind that we should exercise our beneficence, calling the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind to our feast. *Blessed are the pitiful.*

Now when we come to the contemplative life we no longer speak of merits, for the contemplative life is not that by which we earn, but that very end which is earned. In place, then, of further merits, those effects of merit which predispose to the contemplative life, which is the highest earthly anticipation of heavenly bliss, are enumerated. And these effects are two-fold, upon ourselves and upon others. If we are humble, gentle, ready to face hardships, hungering and thirsting after righteousness and tenderly merciful, we have already reached that purity of heart which is the inward predisposition for the reception of the ultimate blessing. *Blessed are the pure in heart.*

And these dispositions, and the conduct which they inevitably dictate, and the spirit which they breathe, lay a calming hand on the passion and turmoils of the earth, and bring the contemplative atmosphere of peace even into the midst of conflict. *Blessed are the peacemakers.*

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV

Notes to pp. 92, 107-111

Aquinas equates the *principia fidei* with the *auctoritates sacrae Scripturae* without qualification; and adds: "Ex his autem principiis ita probatur aliquid apud fideles sicut etiam ex principiis naturaliter notis probatur aliquid apud omnes."—*Sum. Theol.* II. ii. qu. i. art. 5, ad secundum.

This is why different ground must be taken in arguing with Jews who do not accept the authority of the New Testament, and still more with those who accept none of the Scriptures, since: "Mahumetistae et Pagani, non conveniunt nobiscum in auctoritate alicujus scripturae, per quam possint convinci."—*Contra Gentiles*, I. 2.

All that the theologian need stipulate for, then, is acceptance of the authority of the canonical Scriptures. "Auctoritatibus autem canonicae Scripturae utitur [sacra ecclesia] proprie, ex necessitate argumentando. Auctoritatibus autem aliorum doctorum ecclesiae, quasi arguendo ex propriis, sed probabiliter. Innititur enim fides nostra revelationi Apostolis et Prophetis factae, qui canonicos libros scripserunt: non autem revelationi, si qua fuit aliis doctoribus facta."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. i. art. 8, ad secundum.

But examples of liturgical and dogmatic authorities cited as leading indications of the truth are:

"Sed contra est quod in Symbolo dicitur *Deum de Deo*."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xxxix. art. 4.

"Sed contra est quod in collecta dicitur: *Angeli tui sancti, habitantes in ea, nos in pace custodiant.*"—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. lii. art. 1.

"Sed contra est quod dicitur in libro *de Eccles. Dogmat.*, quod *animae rationales non seminantur per coitum.*"—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. cxviii. art. 2.

And that, whereas the sole authority is that of the Scriptures, it is the Church that tells you how to understand them aright, is expressly stated. "Omnibus articulis fidei inhaeret fides propter unum medium, scilicet propter veritatem primam propositam nobis in Scripturis secundum doctrinam Ecclesiae intellectis sane."—*Sum. Theol.* II. ii. qu. v. art. 3, ad secundum.

It is Scripture itself that pronounces the Church competent to declare its meaning: "Dico ergo, quod judicium eorum qui praesunt Ecclesiae, potest errare in quibuslibet, si personae eorum tantum respiciantur. Si vero consideretur divina providentia, quae Ecclesiam suam Spiritu sancto dirigit, ut non erret, sicut ipso promisit, Joan. 14, quod Spiritus adveniens doceret omnem veritatem, de necessariis scilicet ad salutem; certum est quod judicium Ecclesiae universalis errare in his quae ad fidem pertinent, impossibile est."—*Quodlibet*, IX. art. 16, corp.

And finally, the pope is competent to declare what the Church means: "Ad illius ergo auctoritatem pertinet editio symboli ad cuius auctoritatem pertinet sententialiter determinare ea quae sunt fidei, ut ab omnibus inconcussa fide teneantur. Hoc autem pertinet ad auctoritatem Summi Pontificis, *ad quem maiores et difficiliores Ecclesiae quaestiones referuntur*, ut dicitur in *Decretis*, dist.

xvii. Unde et Dominus, Luc. xxii. Petro dixit, quem Summum Pontificem constituit: *Ego pro te rogavi, Petre, ut non deficiat fides tua: et tu aliquando conversus confirma fratres tuos.* Et huius ratio est quia una fides debet esse totius Ecclesiae: secundum illud I *ad Cor.* i.: *Idipsum dicatis omnes, et non sint in vobis schismata.* Quod servari non posset nisi quaestio fidei de fide exorta determinaretur per eum qui toti Ecclesiae praeest, ut sic eius sententia a tota Ecclesia firmiter teneatur. Et ideo ad solam auctoritatem Summi Pontificis pertinet nova editio symboli: sicut et omnia alia quae pertinent ad totam Ecclesiam, ut congregare synodum generalem et alia huiusmodi."—*Sum. Theol.* II. ii. qu. i. art. 10, corp.

On the possibility of holding erroneous views without being guilty of heresy: "Indirecte vero ad fidem pertinent ea ex quibus consequitur aliquid contrarium fidei; sicut si quis diceret Samuelem non fuisse filium Elcanae; ex hoc enim sequitur Scripturam divinam esse falsam. Circa huiusmodi ergo absque periculo haeresis aliquis falsum potest opinari, antequam consideretur, vel determinatum sit, quod ex hoc sequitur aliquid contrarium fidei: et maxime si non pertinaciter adhaereat. Sed postquam manifestum est, et praecipue si sit per Ecclesiam determinatum, quod ex hoc sequitur aliquid contrarium fidei, in hoc errare non esset absque haeresi. Et propter hoc, multa nunc reputantur haeretica, quae prius non reputabantur, propter hoc quod nunc est magis manifestum quid ex eis sequatur."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xxxii. art. 4, corp.

"Ad tertium dicendum quod, sicut Augustinus dicit, et habetur in *Decretis*, xxiv[a]. qu. iii.: *Si qui*

sententiam suam, quamvis falsam atque perversam, nulla . pertinaci animositate defendunt, quaerunt autem cauta sollicitudine veritatem, corrigi parati cum invenerint, nequaquam sunt inter haereticos deputandi: quia scilicet non habent electionem contradicentem Ecclesiae doctrinae. Sic ergo aliqui Doctores dissensisse videntur vel circa ea quorum nihil interest ad fidem utrum sic vel aliter teneatur; vel etiam in quibusdam ad fidem pertinentibus quae nondum erant per Ecclesiam determinata. Postquam autem essent auctoritate universalis Ecclesiae determinata, si quis tali ordinationi pertinaciter repugnaret, haereticus censeretur. Quae quidem auctoritas principaliter residet in Summo Pontifice. Dicitur enim xxiv[a]. qu. i.: *Quoties fidei ratio ventilatur, arbitror omnes fratres nostros et coepiscopos non nisi ad Petrum, idest sui nominis auctoritatem referre debere.* Contra cuius auctoritatem nec Hieronymus nec Augustinus nec aliquis sacrorum Doctorum suam sententiam defendit. Unde dicit Hieronymus: *Haec est fides, Papa Beatissime, quam in Catholica didicimus Ecclesia. In qua si minus perite aut parum caute forte aliquid positum est, emendari cupimus a te, qui Petri fidem et sedem tenes. Si autem haec nostra confessio apostalatus tui iudicio comprobatur, quicumque me culpare voluerit, se imperitum vel malevolum, vel etiam non catholicum sed haereticum, comprobabit.*"—*Sum. Theol.* II. ii. qu. xi. art. 2, ad tertium.

On the existence of an apostolic tradition outside Scripture: "Ad quartum dicendum quod Apostoli, familiari instinctu Spiritus Sancti, quaedam ecclesiis tradiderunt servanda quae non reliquerunt in scriptis, sed in observatione Ecclesiae per suc-

cessionem fidelium sunt ordinata. Unde ipse dicit, II. Thess. ii.: *State, et tenete traditiones quas didicistis, sive per sermonem*, scilicet ab ore prolatum, *sive per epistolam*, scilicet scripto transmissam. Et inter huiusmodi traditiones est imaginum Christi adoratio. Unde et beatus Lucas dictitur depinxisse imaginem Christi, quae Romae habetur." —*Sum. Theol.* III. qu. xxv. art. 3, ad quartum.

Note that the phrase is *servanda* not *credenda*, and in harmony with this: "Respondeo dicendum quod maximam habet auctoritatem Ecclesiae consuetudo, quae semper est in omnibus aemulanda. Quia et ipsa doctrina Catholicorum Doctorum ab Ecclesia auctoritatem habet: unde magis standum est auctoritati Ecclesiae quam auctoritati vel Augustini vel Hieronymi vel cuiuscumque Doctoris. Hoc autem Ecclesiae usus nunquam habuit quod Iudaeorum filii invitis parentibus baptizarentur: quamvis fuerint retroactis temporibus multi Catholici principes potentissimi, ut Constantinus, Theodosius, quibus familiares fuerunt sanctissimi episcopi, ut Sylvester Constantino et Ambrosius Theodosio, qui nullo modo hoc praetermisissent ab eis impetrare, si hoc esset consonum rationi. Et ideo periculosum videtur hanc assertionem de novo inducere, ut praeter consuetudinem in Ecclesia hactenus observatam, Iudaeorum filii invitis parentibus baptizarentur."—*Sum. Theol.* II. ii. qu. x. art. 12, corp.

CHAPTER V

DANTE AND AQUINAS

We are now prepared to enter upon our proper subject, the relation of Dante to Aquinas. We may begin by collecting some of the evidence of Dante's direct study of Aquinas, and of his use of special passages. Not that I lay any great stress on what is usually meant by Dante's "obligations" to this or that author. It is always more important to know what Dante does with an idea or a phrase than to know where he got it from. But it happens that a collection of passages in Dante that were obviously suggested by passages in the *Contra Gentiles* will not only be interesting in itself, but will also give us a clue to the lines on which Dante's own mind was early at work, which will be of special value to us in our further studies.

Dante was already studying Aquinas when he arranged and linked together the poems of the *Vita Nuova*, probably not later than A.D. 1292. In the prose frame-work, in which the poems are enclosed, he shows a considerable knowledge of Aristotle's works, including at least the *De Anima*, the "Physics," the "Metaphysics," and the "Ethics." It would be probable in any case

that he studied them with the aid of S. Thomas's commentaries; and there is a quaint little bit of evidence which raises this presumption almost to a certainty, at the same time showing how the poet in Dante was threatened, in his youth, by the naive pedantry of the student, that was also in him. This evidence is contained in those provoking analyses of the poems which have perhaps annoyed every reader of the *Vita Nuova* since the book was first written even to this day! Dante Gabriel Rossetti could not bring himself to translate them, and not venturing to omit them, relied on the good nature of his brother to relieve him of the task of rendering them into English. And we know from a statement of Boccaccio's that Dante himself subsequently perceived that they were a blemish on his work and wished that he had omitted them; and Boccaccio actually did omit them from one of the copies he himself made with his own hand. Now I think no one who has read the elaborate analyses of the Aristotelian text in the commentaries of S. Thomas can have much doubt as to the influence which caused this lapse from the norms of art. Dante tells us himself that soon after Beatrice's death he became a great student of philosophy, and as he took his own poems very seriously he treated them with all the dignity that could possibly be due from a commentator to his text. Now Aquinas, when commenting on Aristotle, is full of such passages as this—

"When the Philosopher has explained the visible he goes on to explain the audible, to wit sound, and his treatment is divided into two parts. In the first he explains sound in general; in the second he explains a particular species of sound, to wit the voice: beginning here, 'Now the voice.' The first part is divided into two. In the first he explains what sound is; in the second he distinguishes between distinctions of sounds; where he says, 'Now the distinctions of sounds.' The first is divided into two, etc."—*De Anima*, lib. ii., lectio xvi.

Dante, following at a humble distance, tells us—

"This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first I speak of him [Love] in his potential capacity; in the second I speak of him in so far as his potentiality is reduced to actuality. The second begins here: 'Beauty appears.' The first is divided into two: in the first I tell the subject in which this potentiality resides; in the second I say how this subject and this potentiality are brought into being and how the one is to the other as form is to material. The second begins here: 'Nature makes them.' Then when I say, 'Beauty appears,' I tell how this potentiality is reduced to actuality; and first how it is so reduced in man, and then how it is so reduced in woman, here: 'And the like accomplishes in woman.'"—"V. N." § 20.

When we come to the second period of Dante's literary activity, which covers the composition of the *Convivio* and the *De Monarchia*,[1] we are not left to inference; for in both works Dante

[1] I date them 1308 and 1309 respectively.

expressly quotes from the *Contra Gentiles*, referring to it by name; but we shall see that in point of fact this book was something far more and better to him than a quarry for quotations. The ode that stands at the head of the fourth book of the *Convivio* deals with the nature of true nobility; and in his commentary upon it Dante declares that he wishes the poem to be cited, not in accordance with the usual custom by its first line, *Le dolci rime d'amor, ch'io solia*, but by the first words of the tornata, *Contra gli erranti*, "Against the erring ones"; and he adds that the name is "chosen after the example of the good friar Thomas of Aquino, who gave the name 'Against the Gentiles' to a book of his which he made to the confusion of all those who depart from our faith." It seems quite probable that when Dante composed the ode he had the example of Thomas before him, and introduced the words *Contra gli erranti* deliberately; but at any rate it is certain that when he wrote his wonderful explanation of it (in prose far more poetical than the verse it illustrates—if we except the exquisite concluding stanza) he was on the war-path against the degraded views of nobility prevailing in the world, and wrote "to the confusion of all those who depart" from the true faith, as held and expounded by himself, as to the nature of Nobility.

This deliberate challenge of a comparison between his own analysis and refutation of mistaken

views as to what constitutes a gentleman with one of the most important treatises of the greatest theologian of the age, wherein he analyses and refutes false conceptions of the faith on which eternal salvation depends, may strike us as somewhat quaint; but it is thoroughly characteristic, and is to be taken very seriously, both in itself and yet more as an indication of the lines on which Dante's mind was moving during the whole of the *Convivio* and *De Monarchia* period. If we turn to the passage in which the *Contra Gentiles* is cited by name, in the later work[1] we find that Dante is engaged in proving that the Roman power could claim the express sanction of God manifested in sundry ways, and amongst others by the "suffrage" or support of miracles. He quotes Thomas as saying in the third book of the *Contra Gentiles*,[2] "A miracle is that which takes place through divine agency, beside the order commonly instituted in things"; and goes on to explain how Thomas proves that God alone can work miracles. He then proceeds to appeal to the miracle of the shields of the Salian priests, the saving of the Capitol by the warning of the geese, the unendurable hail-storm which prevented Hannibal from marching on Rome, and the escape of Cloelia by swimming across the Tiber, as direct divine confirmations of the power of Rome. Here, on a widely different field, we encounter exactly the

[1] *De Monarchia*, ii. 4: 5 *sqq.* [2] Cap. 101.

same parallel between the temporal and the spiritual life which we have already met in the comparison of the *Contra gli erranti* to the *Contra Gentiles*. If the authority of the Church rests upon miracles, so does the authority of the Empire. And we perceive that as Dante read the treatise of Aquinas with its exclusive reference to the spiritual sphere his own mind was working on the problems of the temporal life, not, as has been sometimes maintained, to the exclusion of the spiritual side of man's nature, still less in contempt of it, but with the profound conviction that the temporal order is an essential part of the Providential scheme and is under the Providential care; that it ought to be, and can be, brought into closer relations with the spiritual sphere; that it is ruled by identical or analogous principles, and should be brought into more worthy parallelism with it. That this does indeed represent the fundamental movement of Dante's mind throughout this period is abundantly evident from the treatises themselves, culminating in the concluding chapters of the *De Monarchia*. And if we go on to examine the other parallel passages in which the form of Dante's own expression is palpably suggested or influenced by the *Contra Gentiles*, we shall find still further evidence of this drift of his mind. Together they form an instructive example of the use that Dante could make of his material. Much of what is often spoken of as his imitation of his sources or his

borrowing from them is in truth a veritable assimilation; for the vital processes of his own mind were supported rather than guided by what he read. He was dependent on them only in the sense in which a man's life is dependent upon his food. And even where the parallel is close, it would often be almost as misleading to say that Dante is imitating as it would be to say that a man's brain imitates the beef and bread which he consumes.

In the third chapter of the first book of the *Contra Gentiles* Aquinas, having shown that some of the truths of theology which are divinely revealed are inaccessible to the human intellect, goes on, as we have seen, to show that it is also suitable that certain divine truths which the human faculties are capable of attaining to should nevertheless be authoritatively laid down as objects of belief or faith. If the reader will turn back to pp. 100 *sqq.*, or, far better, if he will turn to the chapter (*Contra Gentiles*, 1, 4) in Aquinas himself, he will hardly doubt whence the suggestion of the magnificent opening of the *Convivio* came. All men desire to know, for reason is the specific faculty of man in which he finds the distinctive perfection, towards which he is naturally drawn; but defects of the senses which are the gates of knowledge, poisoned appetites which make the soul sicken at its own proper food, the pressure of civic and family affairs, the sloth that finds excuse in lack of opportunity and companionship, all combine to exclude

the great herd of mankind from true humanity, and to keep them with swine pasturing upon acorns, instead of sitting at the table where the bread of angels is ministered to the few who receive what all desire. The seats of learning wrap themselves in the robe of Latinity and will not so much as touch the profane multitude; and they are too often the hot-beds of worldly ambition rather than the nurseries of the pure love of wisdom; for it is the professions that seek them, and when did not profession tend to choke humanity? And so the great lay missionary, who had trounced the "Philistines" in the *Contra gli erranti*, even as Aquinas had wrought with the Infidel, now dares to take his cue from the divine goodness itself, and even as the great Revealer had brought not only inaccessible but also accessible truth within the reach of those who of their own initiative would never find it, so he, humble student as he is, not even having a seat himself at the table of the angel-food, but picking up a few crumbs that fall from it, will doff the Latin robe of pride, exclusiveness, and esoteric mystery, and moved by pity and love will pour out the treasures of philosophy for the busy men and women of the world, flooding with the light of the new sun of Italian teaching "those who are in darkness and shadow because the old sun [of Latin teaching] shines not for them." [1]

[1] *Convivio*, i. 1 (very freely paraphrased), and 13: 87-89. Cf. pp. 100 *sq.*

And again in the third book of the *Contra Gentiles* Aquinas is concerned to show that man's nature contains within itself a demand for blessedness which its own powers cannot satisfy.[1] Revelation partially meets this demand, but even revelation points in its turn to a higher vision that will only be possible when in the future life God has conferred powers upon man that lie above and outside those of his own nature. In a series of chapters Aquinas shows that human blessedness does not consist in the delights of the body, nor in honours, nor in human glory, nor in riches, nor in secular power, nor in any beauty, health, or strength of the body, nor in the sensitive nature, nor in the operations of the moral virtues, nor in the exercise of prudence or wisdom, nor in artistic production—but only in the contemplation of God: and not such contemplation as is common to the run of men, nor such as can be reached by philosophic argument, nor even such as can be had by faith; nor in knowing angelic and spiritual substances, were such knowledge really attainable on earth, but only in seeing God in his essential nature which is impossible to any man in this life. When, in the *De Monarchia*, Dante was accurately defining the relation of the temporal to the spiritual regimen, and of the goal of this life to the goal of the life eternal, he took the orderly exercise of the moral virtues, typified by the Earthly Paradise or the Garden of Eden, as the supreme goal of *this*

[1] Cf. *supra* pp. 102 *sq.*

life, worthy in itself, and so in a sense a "final" goal, although it perfected only the lower side of man's nature and was therefore, in another sense, subordinate to the goal of the life eternal. This earthly goal, the actualising of all the potentialities of the human mind and character, regarded from the earthly point of view, implied a harmonious co-operation between all individuals, families, and races of men, and therefore could only be based on peace, the foundation of which is justice, the foe of which is greed. "Whence it is manifest that universal peace is the best of all those things which are ordained for our blessedness. And that is why there rang out to the shepherds from on high, not riches, not pleasures, not honours, not length of life, not health, not strength, not beauty, but peace." [1]

Less important but still worthy of notice is the further passage in which Dante applies the arguments of Aquinas for the unique authority of the pope to the unique authority of the emperor. Where there is room for dispute there must be an arbiter, Aquinas argues; but there is room for dispute as to what are to be regarded as the authoritative utterances of the Church. And the pope is then the divinely appointed arbiter. And Dante silently adopts the argument and applies it to the powers of earth. There is room for dispute among the kings of the earth, and there must be a supreme

[1] *De Monarchia*, i. 4: 16-23.

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arbiter, the emperor, whose function it is to interpret and administer the Roman law and so preserve that peace based upon justice, under which, and under which only, humanity as a whole can reach the goal of civilisation, by the actualising of all its potentialities.[1]

I would invite the reader to dwell upon this series of parallels, for we shall have to return more than once to the great thought that underlies them. Every student of the "Comedy" has noticed the systematic parallelism between the sacred and secular examples of virtue and of vice, and Dante's steady assertion of the intrinsic worth of the secular life. The history of Rome (that is to say, of the elaboration of that Roman Law which is the supreme instrument for the fruitful and peaceful regulation of the affairs of men, and the supreme guardian of peace) is a sacred history no less than that of Palestine. And it was no less natural and seemly that Aeneas should be privileged to penetrate the unseen world to receive guidance in the founding of Rome than that Paul should have the like privilege for the confirmation of the saving faith. And this is not a secularising of the spiritual but a spiritualising of the secular order of things. It is a systematic attempt to raise this life to the dignity and beauty of the life of Eden, which in Dante's view was not merely a preliminary to the life of heaven, but an integral part of God's scheme

[1] Cf. *sup.* p. 103; and see *Contra Gentiles*, iv. 76; *De Monarchia*, i. 14.

for man and a part which was worthily associated with the other.[1] It was not only a tradition of what once was, it was a perpetual challenge to all men, and especially to all rulers and governors, to actualise the still existing potentialities of this life, and make it a thing beautiful and Eden-like in itself, and a worthy prelude to the heaven of the beatific vision.

I think there can be no doubt that the series of passages now cited show a direct acquaintance on Dante's part with the *Contra Gentiles*. But how far that acquaintance went it is difficult to say. The order of the angelic hierarchies in *Convivio*, ii. 6: 105-161, for instance, departs from that given in the *Contra Gentiles*, iii. 80, on the authority of Dionysius. Dante expressly adopted this order himself afterwards (*Paradiso*, xxviii. 133-135). Had he studied this portion of the *Contra Gentiles* when he wrote the *Convivio?* And if so, had he forgotten it? Or did he think the authority of Brunetto Latini, or of Isidore, as good as that of S. Thomas? The latter suggestion hardly seems probable.

Nor is it easy to be sure how far Dante mastered the larger and more celebrated *Summa Theologica* at any period of his life. My own impression is that we are on much safer ground when we use the works of Aquinas as the best means of introducing us into the mental and theological

[1] Cf. pp. 218 *sqq.*

atmosphere that Dante breathed, than when we assume, without special evidence, that he had actually steeped himself in the study of them and knew their exact teaching upon every point. At any rate we shall better understand Dante, and shall better use Aquinas as an aid in studying him, if we think of him as moving in the circle of ideas which Aquinas presents to us in its systematic completeness, than if we think of him as picking out striking passages of Aquinas to versify, or as nervously consulting him, as a book of reference, to keep him from going astray in doctrine. When used in the true spirit the works of Aquinas often throw unsuspected light even on minute details in the "Comedy," and indefinitely enrich and deepen the colour of passages already full of meaning and beauty, supplying us with the presuppositions necessary to a full comprehension of passing hints, or endowing us with the sense by which we feel the natural requirements of some given situation.

All this will be abundantly illustrated as we proceed, but a few isolated examples may be given here. I will begin with one of quite secondary importance. It will be remembered how in the second canto of the *Inferno* we learn that Beatrice was sitting in bliss by Rachel's side, apparently unconcerned as to Dante's fate, until Lucia at the prompting of the Virgin urged her to go to his rescue. Why had she to be *told* of his distress? it has been asked. Why did she not see

it as she looked into the divine mirror in which all things are seen? It is the kind of question that one who happens to have no answer to it may be inclined to resent. Are we to allow nothing for poetic imagery? Is poetry always to dance in the shackles of theology? But it happens that this particular representation is in perfect harmony with theological belief; and poetry has not to dance in the shackles but may glide on the wings of theology. "The dead," Aquinas tells us, "by their own natural state know nought of the things that are being done in this world, least of all of the inner movements of the heart, but, as Gregory saith, whatsoever it is fitting that they should know concerning the things that are going on here with us, even the inner motions of the heart, is manifested in the Word [*i.e.* in the Vision of God] to the blessed. And it pre-eminently befits their exaltation that they should have knowledge of the petitions made to them either by the voice or in the heart, and therefore they know the petitions that we direct to them, because God makes them manifest to them."[1] This passage in Aquinas occurs in express reference to the efficacy of petitions made to the saints, but incidentally it explains how Beatrice might be ignorant of Dante's distress until by direct agency of diviner powers it was revealed to her.

Far more important than such a detail is the

[1] *Summa Theologica*, II. ii. qu. lxxxiii. art. 4.

consideration, say, of *Purgatorio*, xviii. 55-57, one of the most difficult and important passages in the "Purgatory." To understand it we must bear in mind the distinction drawn by Aquinas, over and over again, between the affections, or appetite, and the intellect. The intellect starts from the axioms, or other ascertained truths, and from this basis builds up the edifice of knowledge; what we already know in every case determining the next step; and the validity of the process must be proved by tracing back the connection, and assuring ourselves in every case that the step we are considering can be legitimately deduced from the one that precedes it; just as we build up our logical or geometrical knowledge from the first truths or axioms that none can deny. On the other hand our *action* is determined by our goal; that is to say, we begin at the end, starting not from where we are, but from where we wish to be. For example, we desire blessedness, and conceive that if we had certain things which we have not, or knew certain things which we know not, we should get the blessedness we desire. How then are we to get or learn these things? Certain conditions present themselves to us as suitable or necessary means. We must then secure these conditions, and so we come down till we have established a connection between our present resources and the ultimate goal, and see what to do now. All hangs from the contemplated end instead of being reared

on the secured foundation. If I go wrong in action, it is not because my next step is not coherently connected with the state in which I am, but because it is not ultimately affiliated to the goal at which I aim; as, for instance, when I yield to the importunity of some passing passion, the gratification of which presents itself to me as the condition of blessedness, whereas it is really the reverse. We see, then, that just as the intellect may be deluded by clever sophistry which makes something that really contradicts the axioms look as if it followed from them, so also the will may be misled by something that announces itself as a necessary step to the attainment of blessedness, whereas really it is a step away from it.[1]

No man, Dante argues, is responsible for the desire for blessedness. It is implanted in every human soul as surely and inevitably as the honey-making instinct in the bee. Nor can he be held responsible for the nature or limitations of those first principles or axioms in the intellectual world which by his very nature he must hold. But he is responsible for such a training of his intellect as will fortify it against false inferences, and such a training of his will as will fortify it against the seductions of the pretenders who declare themselves guides to blessedness. It follows that to the fully-trained intellect nothing that does not really follow from the axioms will look as if it did, and to the fully-

[1] See pp. 148 *sq.*

trained will nothing that does not really lead to the full and ultimate blessing will look or feel as if it did. All the intermediate steps between axioms and advanced conclusions in the one case, and between the final goal and the immediate impulse in the other, will have been completely affiliated to data or end respectively, as the case may be. Dante is only concerned, in the passage we are examining, with the action of the will, and its responsibility for choosing those steps that really lead to the goal given beforehand by our very nature. But he introduces a passing reference to the inverse order of the intellect, baffling in its brevity to the uninformed but splendidly luminous to the instructed: "Wherefore, whence the understanding of the prime notions comes, no man knoweth, nor whence the love of the prime objects of desire: It is in you like the instinct for honey-making in the bee. And this prime act of will [namely, willing our own blessedness] is not susceptible of the merit of praise or blame. But that every other choice may be affiliated to this there is born in you the power that counsels, and that should hold the threshold of assent. This is the principle whence the rationale of merit in you flows, according as it gathers in or riddles out good and guilty loves."

Let us pass to a yet wider theme, one indeed that may be said to illuminate the whole scheme of the "Comedy," especially of the *Paradiso*. In *Paradiso*, xxiii. 20 *sq.*, the host of the redeemed is

referred to as "the whole harvest gathered from the circling of these spheres." And in the first canto of the *Paradiso* the general movement of the universe, material and spiritual, is described as due to the instinct which carries every creature over the great ocean of being to its proper haven. When the splendour of this latter image has asserted itself in the mind, and associated itself with the other passages in which all the organic movements of the universe are conceived as love—the stone dropping and the flame rising to their appointed places, in which they shall be at rest—the question is apt to rise: But how comes it that if each seeks the place to which it belongs they have ever been parted from them? Why are they ever separated by these great interspaces of the ocean of being from the haven for which they yearn, and to which they belong? The answer to the question takes us right to the heart of the scheme of the universe expounded by Aquinas. God not only knows himself but wills himself. He wills his own goodness, and goodness seeks to communicate itself. This is the meaning of creation;[1] and it involves the self-manifestation or self-revelation of God. But the infinite unity and simplicity cannot be revealed or manifested to the finite mind as unity; it must be so revealed as diversity. And the spiritual beings themselves to whom the goodness of God is to be communicated

[1] Cf. *Paradiso*, vii. 64-66; xxix. 13-15.

must be diverse, that their variety may give some hint of the immensity of that wealth which exists, undivided, in the Divine Being. Angels then are created with intelligence that grasps the whole range of knowledge, and feels the whole impulse of love, in one single and continuous act. There is no progress and growth in the angelic mind, no intermission and recurrence of thought or love, no dependence of one truth upon another, for all alike are revealed by direct vision. But man grows from the dim consciousness of the babe to the perfect insight of the blessed spirit when this life is past; and he builds up his successive acquisitions on the basis of sense perceptions, and the images or phantasms of them which he can conjure up and recall when the perceptions themselves have passed. Slowly he rises away from these images towards the region of pure intellectual perceptions, like those of the immaterial angels, which he can never perfectly attain in this life. Thus God reveals himself in two orders of intelligences, the one of which receives at once, and the other gradually gains its full dimensions. Intelligences of this latter order are not pure spirit, but body and spirit united; and though the spirit reaches beyond the body, yet it receives the material on which it works through the gates of bodily senses. Hence the whole material universe is designed for the support and education of human souls. It feeds our bodies; it educates our minds, which slowly learn to

trace in it the imprint of the divine goodness.[1] And it furnishes us meanwhile with the means of self-expression, artistic or other. Now the life of nature is maintained by change, elemental combination and resolution, the coming into and passing out of existence. All the elements in their proper nature seek their natural positions. But if the earth were at the centre, swathed round by the water, enveloped by the air, girt with fire, and bounded by the heavens, there would be no intermingling of the elements, and therefore no combination and life to minister to the soul of man through his body. And therefore the higher or universal nature dominates the proper or individual nature of the elements,[2] and by the impulse and attraction of the moving heavens perpetually disturbs the natural order, parting each element from its proper site towards which its own nature is perpetually drawing it. The circling heavens then are the ultimate instrument by which the divine power ripens and gathers in perfected human souls. When the tale of saints is complete, and the whole cosmic process has achieved its work, the angelic powers will cease to revolve the heavens;[3]

[1] Cf. *Paradiso*, i. 103-108.

[2] Cf. *De Aqua et Terra*, § xviii. 43-68.

[3] Cf. *Convivio*, ii. 15, 108-118. There is no inconsistency between this passage and *Paradiso*, xxix. 35, 36, which means only that the material of the heavens never has existed and never will exist by itself in a formless state. In this Dante contrasts it with the material of the elements. See pp. 146 *sq.* Aquinas would hold it equally true in both cases.

the elements, no longer disturbed, will each find its perfect place of rest. The function of the material universe will be accomplished, and when its restless yearning is stilled in perfect peace, there will be "a new heaven and a new earth." The host of the redeemed is the "harvest reaped" through the long centuries by the revolving spheres that are now to cease from their labours.

> "Ecco le schiere
> Del trionfo di Cristo, e tutto il frutto
> Ricolto del girar di queste spere."

These examples indicate the kind of help the student of Dante will receive from Aquinas, but we shall see presently how very far from the truth we should be if we thought of Dante as scrupulously moving within the circle of beliefs sanctioned by Aquinas, or as attempting to imitate and reproduce his representations; and it may be well in this preliminary sketch to give instances in which Dante spontaneously or deliberately departs from Aquinas.

Readers of the "Comedy" may have noticed that Dante's devils are never tempters. They watch for the souls of sinners and seize, or claim, them at the moment of death, and they torture them in hell; but they are never represented as tempting them in life. Aquinas, on the other hand, though he is careful to assert that they have no direct power of acting upon the will, allows them

a fearful power of what modern psychologists call "suggestion," by means of the images or phantasmata which they can raise in the mind.

It may well be that Dante was in this matter simply following his own bent and was unconscious of any difference between himself and Aquinas. But he can hardly have thought that his own elaborate and fascinating system of relations between the successive heavens and the orders and hierarchies of angels could claim any support from Thomas, the Angelic Doctor; for there is not, that I have found, a hint of anything of the kind in his works. In fact he expresses the opinion at least twice that the angels that move the heavens most likely all belong to the order of Virtues.[1] And again, Aquinas so often and so emphatically declares that God alone is "pure actuality," and so elaborately explains why the angels are not, that Dante, one would think, must have been aware that he was departing from his teaching when he declared that angels were created as "pure act."[2]

The point as to the potentialities of angels, however, is not of much significance, and it might conceivably be thought that, here as elsewhere,[3] Dante is consciously simplifying his material. But it is clear that in one point at least, and that an important one, he not only departed from the

[1] *Opusc.* ix. art. 17. *Com. in Sententias*, iv. Dist. xlviii., qu. 1, art. 4, quæst. 4, sol. 3.

[2] *Paradiso*, xxix. 31-33.

[3] See pp. 187 *sqq.*

teaching of Aquinas and others, but deliberately contradicted it.

We have already seen [1] that at a comparatively early stage of his studies Dante's mind was exercised on the problem of the intelligibility of First Matter. Now both the *Contra Gentiles* and the *Summa Theologica* are sufficiently explicit as to this. Matter can only exist, and God is only cognisant of it, as informed, not as formless. One might suppose that at this early stage of his studies Dante either had not mastered the full contents of the teaching of Aquinas, or that he found his treatment of the subject unsatisfactory and baffling; but it is quite clear that he was particularly interested in the subject, and we must therefore suppose that he is speaking deliberately in several passages in the *Paradiso* in which he rejects the teaching not only of Aquinas, but of Peter Lombard, Albertus Magnus and Bonaventura,[2] as to the possibility of independent existence of First Matter. Dante holds, with Augustine, perhaps, but certainly against all these later doctors, that God created First Matter in its pure and formless state; whereas all the authorities mentioned above are quite clear on the point that First Matter never existed, and cannot exist, in this formless state. In that case it was created either, as Aquinas supposes, under the elemental forms of earth,

[1] See pp. 67 *sq.*

[2] See Peter Lombard, ii. *Sentences*, xii. and the commentaries on the passage by Aquinas and the rest.

water, etc., though perhaps in a confused and imperfect state, or it had some intermediate and more general form of which it is impossible to give any more defined account. But Dante tells us in the seventh canto of the *Paradiso* that the elements were informed by created power, though the matter which was informed by such power was directly created by God.[1] Accordingly, the elements will be dissolved and they endure but for a space,[2] which is directly counter to the teaching of Aquinas at the end of the last book of the *Contra Gentiles*, for example. Nor is this a casual expression of Dante's, for in *Paradiso*, xxix. 34, we are told that "pure potentiality," which line 22 identifies with pure or formless matter, was separately created and occupied the centre of the universe. It would be impossible to conceive a sharper contradiction of the principle *materia sine forma esse non potest*.[3]

These instances are enough to show that while Dante habitually moved within the circle of scholastic ideas, he did not allow it to confine him when his own thought or his poetic vision broke away from its limitations. In this respect his attitude towards it differed from his attitude towards Christian dogma, which he accepted without question, however grievous a strain it put upon his conscience or his affections.

[1] *Paradiso*, vii. 133-138. [2] Line 126.

[3] For some of the consequences of this philosophical heresy of Dante's see pp. 149 *sq.*

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER V

Notes to pp. 138 *sqq.*

The three following passages, selected out of a great number, will suffice to illustrate the Thomist theory of the action of the intellect and the will respectively: "Nam primo aliquis intelligit ipsa principia secundum se; postmodum autem intelligit ea in ipsis conclusionibus, secundum quod assentit conclusionibus propter principia. . . . Sed in volendo est e converso: nam voluntas per finem devenit ad volendum ea quae sunt ad finem; sicut et intellectus devenit in conclusiones per principia, quae *media* dicuntur. Unde intellectus aliquando intelligit medium, et ex eo non procedit ad conclusionem. Et similiter voluntas aliquando vult finem, et tamen non procedit ad volendum id quod est ad finem."—*Sum. Theol.* II. i. qu. viii. art. 3, corp. *and* ad tertium.

"Dicendum quod liberum arbitrium sic se habet ad eligendum ea quae sunt ad finem, sicut se habet intellectus ad conclusiones. Manifestum est autem quod ad virtutem intellectus pertinet, ut in diversas conclusiones procedere possit secundum principia data: sed quod in aliquam conclusionem procedat praetermittendo ordinem principiorum, hoc est ex defectu ipsius. Unde quod liberum arbitrium diversa eligere possit servato ordine finis, hoc

pertinet ad perfectionem libertatis eius: sed quod eligat aliquid divertendo ab ordine finis, quod est peccare, hoc pertinet ad defectum libertatis. Unde maior libertas arbitrii est in angelis, qui peccare non possunt, quam in nobis, qui peccare possumus." —*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. lxii. art. 8, ad tertium.

"Nam appetere est quidam motus in aliud tendens. Sed illud cujus est appetitus, scilicet appetibile, est principium intellectus practici. Nam illud, quod est primo appetibile, est finis a quo incipit consideratio intellectus practici. Cum enim volumus aliquid deliberare de agendis, primo supponimus finem, deinde procedimus per ordinem ad inquirendum illa, quae sunt propter finem; sic procedentes semper a posteriori ad prius, usque ad illud, quod nobis imminet primo agendum."—*De Anima Comm.* lib. iii. lectio xv.

Note to pp. 146 *sqq.*

It is interesting to note that the most serious of the small group of inconsistencies that can really be brought home to Dante is connected with this very doctrine of the independent existence of First Matter, which he seems to have adopted deliberately, but which is really quite alien from the whole Aristotelian philosophy of Albert and Thomas, which he so seldom violates, though moving with great freedom within it.

If nothing save eternal things were created before hell (*Inferno*, iii. 7, 8), and if the elements are not eternal, then the elements were not created

before hell. Yet when Satan fell (Virgil supposes) the Earth was already formed, and earth and water distinguished (*Inferno*, xxxiv. 121-124). At any rate hell was in the centre of the earth. It has been urged, too, that the ultimate dissolution of the elements is itself inconsistent with Dante's conception of an everlasting material hell; and this is a point which Aquinas takes into serious account in his own theory of the abiding nature of the elements.

And then what of *Paradiso*, xxix. 51? I think it can hardly be doubtful that "the substrate of your elements" means the "first matter" that underlies them. Did Dante give it a certain substance then? And how, in any case, is this representation to be reconciled with the concluding passage of the *Inferno*, in which it is not unformed matter but matter already under the elemental forms that Satan "disturbs"?

It almost seems as if in departing from the teaching of Aquinas on form and matter at the first creation Dante had never really related his own views on the subject to the general body of his thought, and fell into inconsistencies of which he was not himself aware. This is a somewhat startling conclusion which I can hardly suppose the body of Dante students will accept; and I confess to an unsatisfied feeling in leaving this point of philosophical inconsistency where it stands, for in no other instance, I believe, do the special features of Dante's teaching stand apart from organic and constructive movements of his mind working consistently along its own lines.

Passages in Augustine which might seem to

support Dante's theory of a, logically at least, antecedent and independent formless matter are the following: "Quamquam enim scriptum legerimus, Qui fecisti mundum de informi materia: tamen etiam ipsam materiam cujusmodicumque sit, non possumus dicere non ab eo factam, ex quo omnia confitemur et credimus."—*De Genesi ad Litteram, Imperfectus Liber*, sec. 10.

In Sec. 12 Augustine speaks of: "Haec materies quae consequenti [N. B.] operatione Dei, in rerum formas ordinata distinguitur." Whence it would seen that the *materies informis* must be regarded as having a logically antecedent and independent existence, though Augustine does not allow temporal intervals in the Creation.

Cf. *Serm.* CCXIV. (*In traditione Symboli*, iii.), sec. ii.:

"Illa enim quae dicitur informis rerum materies, formarum capax et subjecta operi Creatoris, in omnia est convertibilis, quae placuerit facere Conditori. Non eam Deus velut sibi coæternam, unde mundum fabricaret, invenit: sed eam ipse ex omnino nihilo, cum rebus quas de illa fecit, instituit. Nec fuit ante res ipsas, quae factae videntur ex ipsa: ac per hoc omnipotens ex nihilo primitus cuncta fecit, cum quibus fecit pariter unde fecit."

And again in *Contra Adversarium Legis et Proph.* lib. i. cap. 8:

"Neque enim materies omnino nihil est, de qua in libro Sapientiae legitur, *Qui fecisti mundum de materia informi.* Non ergo quia informis dicta est, omnino nihil est: nec Deo fuit vel ipsa coaeterna, tamquam a nullo facta: nec alius eam fecit, ut

haberet Deus de qua faceret mundum. Absit enim ut dicatur omnipotens non potuisse facere, nisi unde faceret, inveniret. Ergo et ipsam Deus fecit. Nec mala est putanda, quia informis: sed bona est intelligenda, quia formabilis, id est, formationis capax. Quoniam si boni aliquid est forma, nonnihil est boni esse capacem boni." There are other passages to like purpose.

But there is little real difference between Augustine and the Schoolmen, for he goes on in cap. 9: "Nec putandus est Deus informem prius fecisse materiam, et intervallo aliquo interposito temporis formasse quod informe prius fecerat."

CHAPTER VI

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE SOUL

FROM the two chief examples of the preceding chapter (showing how the will and the intellect respectively establish their connections from the base to summit, or from the goal to starting point, and how the material universe is related to the education of the human soul) we may proceed to a more general examination of the scholastic psychology and doctrine of the soul, as the background of Dante's representations. By psychology I mean the theory of the activities and functions of the soul as distinct from the doctrine of its origin, essential nature, and destiny. If the distinction is not at this stage entirely clear it will become so in the course of our investigation.

The scholastic psychology was based upon Aristotle, was subtly influenced by Plato, received important contributions from the Greek and Arabian commentators, especially Avicenna, and was systematically expounded by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas; nor is there any more fascinating portion of the work of Thomas than that in which he elaborates what we may perhaps call hypothetical psychologies, by attempting to

reconstruct on the Aristotelian basis the psychology of man before the Fall, of the soul in the intermediate state after death and before the resurrection, of man in a state of conclusive bliss, of the angelic spirits, of the incarnate God who was also man, and even to some extent of the Blessed Trinity with its inherent internal relations of knowing and loving, contained within the simplicity and unity of absolute Being.

Taken in its whole range it may fairly be said that the scholastic psychology and speculation underlie the whole of Dante's work from the early sections of the *Vita Nuova* to the last cantos of the *Paradiso*. Several branches of what I have called hypothetical psychology (though the term would hardly have approved itself either to Aquinas or Dante), the psychology of angels, for instance, of the souls of the blessed, and of man before the Fall, will claim our incidental or express consideration from time to time, but our present concern is with the functions and activities of the soul under the normal conditions of humanity; and perhaps the most important point of all is the distinction between the two forms of cognition, by sense and by intelligence.

In our general sketch of the progress of Greek thought we familiarised ourselves with the idea that only the general and abiding is the proper object of knowledge, whereas only the individual and changing is cognised by the senses. Thales

saw that the understanding could reveal something that abides when all that the senses cognise changes. Parmenides held that the abiding alone is real, and the changing apparent only. Plato held that abiding types only are real, and that changing individuals represent more or less imperfect and illusory strivings after reality. Aristotle agreed that knowledge can only be of the abiding, but held that the changing and phenomenal is the most real, though not the most intelligible. He would rise from the concrete with which we are most familiar to the abstract which is most intelligible. According to the Aristotelian and scholastic philosophy, then, which recognised the senses as the appointed gates through which all on which the intellect is to operate must pass, it follows that material things, as they stand, are sensible indeed but not intelligible. The intelligible has undergone a process of abstraction. The conception of length being abstracted from a series of long things, or the conceptions of heat, colour, activity, potentiality, actuality, or existence, from the sense impressions of hot, coloured, active, undeveloped, developed, or existing things. But the starting point is always a sensible object or objects. This is illustrated by Beatrice's words when she explains the necessity of expressing to Dante's mind the spiritual intervals between the souls by material spaces: "Thus must we needs speak to your capacity, because it is only from the

object of sense that it apprehends that which it then works up into matter meet for the intellect." [1] Various stages may be distinguished in this process of making material things which are cognisable by the senses the basis of ideas or conceptions cognisable by the intelligence. In the first place our sense impression of a concrete object itself is not directly supplied by the proper sensations of the eye, the ear, and so forth; for we distinguish between a colour and a sound, though the eye cannot do this for it can take no cognisance of a sound, nor can the ear for it can take no cognisance of a colour. And yet both, being objects of sense, must be discerned by sense. We must therefore assume some internal "common" sense which unites and relates the data of the special senses, and so enables us to receive a sense impression of an object, with all its connected and related qualities or attributes of colour, resonance, smell.[2] This "common sense," then, constructs the concrete sense images within us. It is in connection with

[1] "Così parlar conviensi al vostro ingegno,
però che solo da sensato apprende
ciò che fa poscia d'intelletto degno."
Paradiso, iv. 40 *sqq.*

[2] There are certain things, such as number and shape, of which more than one sense can take cognisance, and these are called the "common sensibles." And the student must be on his guard against the confusion that may arise from the fact that the "common sensibles" are not, as one might hastily infer from the nomenclature, the objects of the "common sense," but the objects *common to several* of the proper senses.

this doctrine of the common sense, which Aristotle left as little more than a hint, that some of the most valuable developments of his doctrine by his Greek, Arabian, and Christian followers were evolved. The common sense came to be considered as the primitive and vague sense-faculty, from which the special senses were differentiated, and with which they always remained in connection, so that it supplied the co-ordinating power that combines mere sensations into perceptions.

It is to be noted, however, that the material object itself never enters the consciousness at all. A stone does not enter the eye, so that the semblance, image, or phantasm, which alone enters the mind through the sense, is itself no longer material. But we must not be misled into the belief that these images or phantasms (*species* [1] they are often called) are themselves the things of which we are cognisant. That is not so. It is *by* the *species*, or phantasm, that we have cognisance of the thing itself. But it is the stone, not the sense impression or image of the stone, of which we are conscious. If we are conscious of the image it is only by deliberate reflection and by self-examination of our consciousness that we become so. Our mind then by means of an immaterial image within us becomes actually conscious of a material object outside us. A less

[1] It may be well to treat this as a Latin word and to pronounce it with a hard *c* (*k*) and a short *ĕ* in the first syllable, to distinguish it from "species" in the sense of a class within a genus.

usual term for such a *species* or image (more often used by Albert than Thomas) is *intention*. It would have been quite unnecessary to note this in a general sketch were it not that it occurs in a crucial and difficult passage in the *Purgatorio:* "Your apprehensive faculty draws an intention from an actually existing object, and deploys it within you, so as to make your mind turn to it." [1] Here *intention* is simply equivalent to *image*.

The apprehensive power of sense then derives an immaterial image from the external concrete object, and it is that image by which the mind perceives and on which it works, though what it feels itself conscious of is not the image but the object imaged. The power that forms these images or phantasms is called the phantasy, or sometimes the imagination. But these *species* or phantasms may persist when the object itself is no longer present, or may be recalled by the mind, which then feels that it is no longer cognisant of the object itself, but only of a semblance or image of it, which however is still felt as an image of something external. So far, though we are moving further from our base in actual sensation, we are still dealing with *species sensibiles*, or sense images. But when we have

[1] "Vostra apprensiva da esser verace
tragge intenzione, e dentro a voi la spiega,
sì che l'animo ad essa volger face."
Purgatorio, xviii. 22 *sqq.*

Note that, in strictness, it is not the phantasm, or intention, but the "actually existing object" itself, to which the mind turns, and the further context of the passage requires this.

submitted these *phantasmata* to the process of abstraction, we pass from a *species sensibilis* to a *species intelligibilis*, from an object of sense to an object of intelligence, whether some specific sense image does or does not remain in our minds as a support to the more generalised object of intelligence. For instance, we may have on paper or in our minds the image of a special triangle with its individual size and shape, but in reasoning about it we may choose deliberately to reject some or all of its individual characteristics, and investigate the properties that it has in common with a whole group, or with all other triangles, such as that the sum of its angles equals an angle of continuity. The conception of "triangle" in the abstract will then be a *species intelligibilis*. So with all our general conceptions, whether of objects or of qualities—fish, man, soul, whiteness, growth, existence. Of all of these we are forced to form some kind of mental picture, some *species*, from which the sense element can never be wholly purged away, and which are therefore never quite purely intelligible. Hence the paradox that that which is most intelligible in itself can never be understood by us; or, as the celebrated passage in Aristotle's "Metaphysics" says: "Perhaps (since difficulties arise after two fashions) the cause of our present difficulty is not in the things themselves, but in us; for the intelligence of our souls when contemplating those things which are natu-

rally the most evident of all is like the eyes of bats when they look upon the light of day." [1] And in like manner that which is most directly and obviously cognisable, namely, the sense object, is, as we have seen, essentially unintelligible. It follows that, since it is through the sensible that we approach the intelligible, Dante can express the axiom that we must advance from the known to the unknown in the apparently paradoxical form that the proper approach to the intelligible is through the non-intelligible.[2] Thus an angel, for instance, being pure spirit, has no material and no local existence. It cannot even be said to be anywhere or to go anywhere. That is to say, it is absolutely stripped of all material conditions or attributes. It has in it no qualities whatever that the sense can apprehend, and consequently is purely intelligible. But for the very reason that it is purely intelligible and is purged of every sensible attribute, we can form no sense image or phantasm of it at all, and therefore our minds can have nothing upon which to work and from which to rise to a conception of it. Thus Dante tells us in the *Convivio* that "our intellect, through defect of the power from which it draws the matter of its contemplation, which is a power seated in sense organs, to wit the phantasy, cannot

[1] Metaphysics, Lib. I. *brevis* (II.), Cap. 1, in princ. Cf. *Vita Nuova*, § 42, 29, and *Convivio*, ii. 5; 116-118.

[2] "Così di cosa *intelligibile* per cosa *non intelligibile* trattare si conviene."—*Convivio*, iii. 12; 46-48.

ascend to certain things because the phantasy cannot support it, not having the wherewithal. Such are substances sejunct from matter, which we may not understand nor apprehend perfectly, even if we may arrive at a certain contemplation of them." [1]

The specific human faculty, then, is that of abstraction, by which we pass, however imperfectly, from the *species sensibiles* to the *species intelligibiles*. According to mediaeval psychology animals are entirely without this faculty. The wolf perceives the sheep as a concrete object of desire, responding to its own want, without in any way analysing the source of its desire, or realising that this is a sheep amongst other sheep, resembling each other, but differing from other animals. In the same way a sheep recognises her lamb as responding to her, and another sheep's lamb as not responding, but she does not realise that they are both lambs, and that what her lamb is to her the other lamb is to some other sheep. Hence an animal is absolutely at the disposal of its sense impressions, and though it adapts means to ends, it can never select ends, for want of the power of disentangling the attractive aspect from the concrete object of attraction in which it resides. A man, on the other hand, can not only deliberately seek union with objects which have already given him pleasure, thus strengthening by experience the

[1] *Convivio*, iii. 4; 87-95.

innate trend towards attractive things which is antecedent to the actual pleasure he has experienced from them,[1] but can also compare and judge of attractions, recognise the points in which they resemble and differ from each other, and so not only adapt his means to his ends, but also select his ends, under control always of the one supreme desire for blessedness which is ineradicably fixed in him. It is in connection with this power, as we have seen and shall see again, that man's free will manifests itself.[2]

Very closely related to the scholastic and Dantesque psychology, including the doctrine of free will, is the conception of love in its widest range. Love is used in many senses, both by Dante and Aquinas. It sometimes stands for the whole range of cosmic forces. The inmost trend of the nature of anything, animate or inanimate, conscious or unconscious, is thought and spoken of as its love. Thus the stone loves the centre towards which it falls, the flame the circumference to which it ascends. All that we speak of as "attraction" is included by the mediaeval writers, without any sense of strain or improper metaphor, in the term love. And it is perhaps significant that if we want a term that includes the falling of a stone and the yearning of the soul for goodness, beauty, and truth, we use the term "attraction," which is primarily a physical conception, but

[1] Cf. *Purgatorio*, xviii. 27. [2] Cf. pp. 138 *sqq.*, 193 *sqq.*, 203 *sqq.*

which we extend without sense of breach to the most abstract and spiritual relations; whereas the mediaeval mind fixed upon "love," primarily a spiritual conception, and imported it with no sense of discontinuity into the most elemental of physical phenomena.

Next above this elemental love comes what we moderns might think of as chemical attraction, but which Dante speaks of as the "love of compound bodies for the place ordained for their generation, wherein they accrue, and whence they draw their vigour and power."[1] And so on, up through plant love, corresponding with the most elementary form of soul, or vital principle, the functions of which are confined to nutrition and reproduction; the animal love which is connected with sense impressions and desires; and the human love for perfect and noble things—the instinctive attraction to beauty, goodness, and truth. When Dante speaks of love, it is generally this noble and specifically human love that he has in mind, but he also frequently recognises it in its widest meaning, as in the first canto of the *Paradiso* and the third chapter of the third book of the *Convivio*. Love in the wider sense is the sole motive power of the universe, and therefore no conscious or unconscious being can be actuated by any other principle. From this follows the unexpected consequence that love is not always good. In itself

[1] *Convivio*, iii. 3: 14-18.

indeed it is, but in the complex nature of man, which combines in itself all the elemental and organic loves, it is possible that discord may arise through want of due regulation; and that, by allowing some appetite or impulse to seek its own proper good, without reference to its reactions upon the others, and upon the consequent balance of the whole, love may become guilty. Purely natural love then is infallible, as that of the stone or the flame; but with the lower loves in man, which have been adopted or sanctioned by the reason and so may be called in some sense rational, error is possible. "Neither Creator, nor creature, my son, was ever without love, natural or of the mind, and thou knowest it. The natural love is always void of error, but the other may err through an ill-chosen object, or through defect or through excess of energy."[1] The truly human love, then, which is directed to the supreme objects of desire, can only err by defect. And so we learn in the circle of the slothful that, whereas every one has at least a confused sense of a supreme good which would give complete rest to the soul, he may be laggard either in taking the steps to make this fundamental con-

[1] 'Nè creator nè creatura mai,'
cominciò ei, 'figliuol, fu senza amore,
o naturale o d'animo; e tu il sai.

'Lo natural è sempre senza errore,
ma l'altro puote errar per malo obbietto,
o per poco, o per troppo di vigore.'
Purgatorio, xvii. 91-96.

ception clear or definite, or in pursuing it with due zeal when he sees it. When his mind is fixed on secondary blessings, he may pursue them with undue eagerness, which, if it is deliberate, implies some measure of conscious turning away of the soul from the supreme love of God, and so involves mortal sin. And this is still more obviously the case if, in its pursuit of the things which it desires, the soul allows itself to contract a hatred of those who oppose or rival it. For wherever there is hatred there is positively evil love, that is to say the soul seeks the assuagement of the trend and impulse of its being in the pain, defeat, or injury of some other.

Turning now from psychology and the connected theory of love to the doctrine of the soul itself, we are faced by the questions: What is the soul? What is its ultimate relation to the body? Whence did it come? And if it had a beginning, has it also an end? On this whole range of subjects the issues are more confused, and the fundamental ideas and authorities more conflicting, than in the realm of psychology proper. From the first dawn of speculation we may distinguish between the popular instinct which thinks of the soul as an entity inhabiting the body, and capable of leaving it at will, or on occasion, and the philosophic reflection which regards the soul primarily as the life of the body, and inquires into the nature (material or

other) of the vital principle of living things. Though these lines perpetually cross one another, we can trace them separately, in the main, without much difficulty. The one runs through the conceptions of primitive man, and (in Greece) through the Pythagorean doctrines, the Orphic initiations, the Mysteries generally, and the speculations of Plato. The faith of the Christian Church is one of its higher forms. The other runs through the speculations of the Ionian philosophers, from Thales downwards, and the epoch-making pronouncement of Anaxagoras,[1] to the conceptions formulated in Aristotle's *De Anima*, and elaborated, under Neoplatonic reactions, by the Arabian philosophers. These two lines of thought are entangled rather than blended in the Scholastic Philosophy, for the Schoolmen were Platonists and Christians by nature, and Aristotelians by intellectual training. It is the line that runs from Thales through Anaxagoras to Aristotle that we must now trace a little more fully.

The early Greek philosophers drew no distinction between the soul and the body, or, generally, between the material and the immaterial, or that which thinks and feels and that which is thought and felt. Regarding the soul as the vital principle, they might connect it with the breath or the blood, according to their conception of the seat of life. The philosopher, who, like Thales, thought of water

[1] See next page.

as the ultimate form of things, might note that the breath was moist and might regard it as the purest form of being. Or if he thought the ultimate principle of things was fire, he would note that the breath or the blood is warm; or if air, that breath too is a vapour. The philosophers in general held the principle that like can only be known by like, so that if the soul recognised things it must be because it is kindred to them in its composition. If then its own nature was the purest form of the ultimate constituent of all things, it could take cognisance of them all. And so the sticklers for the equal rights of the four elements, earth, water, fire, and air, maintained that the soul was duly compounded of them all.

But Anaxagoras (*c.* 500-428 B.C.) sharply departed from this whole tradition when he declared the absolute difference in kind between the mind which thinks and the objects which it thinks of. He was the first to proclaim that intelligence, Mind, or νοῦς, is absolutely different from everything else. It is a pure, unmixed, immaterial essence. There can be no assimilation of Mind and Matter. You can neither express one in terms of the other, nor get out of one into the other. Matter only becomes intelligible by the action of Mind. That is to say, Matter was a mere unintelligible chaos until νοῦς, or Mind, brought regulated movement or system into it. The world as we know it is intelligible because it is the outcome of Mind, not

indeed created by Mind but ordered by it, and transformed by it from chaos into cosmos. All thinking if not all living beings must have Mind in them, for it is Mind in them that recognises as intelligible the order that Mind has established. Aristotle says that when Anaxagoras has reached this conception, he appears amongst the previous philosophers like a sober man coming into a room full of babblers. In declaring that the thinking and the thought are absolutely distinct, and that we must conceive of that which thinks not as like but as wholly unlike the phenomenal universe of sense, he had uttered at last the sober reality. It is true that Aristotle proceeds to honeycomb the whole of the philosophy of Anaxagoras, alike under its material and its mental aspects. He asks how it is possible to conceive of Mind as intervening *ab extra* in a chaotic world. What had happened to bring this about? How can we conceive a point at which the relation between Mind and Matter became different from what it had been before? And besides he taxes Anaxagoras with making no use of the principle he has established, when he comes to work things out; but, nevertheless, he recognises the immense step in advance involved in the conception of Mind or Intelligence as absolutely distinct from material things, and he himself was profoundly influenced by it.

There is no trace in Anaxagoras of the conception of the minds of men as individual entities. Perhaps

we may think of immaterial mind-stuff in man recognising the operations of Mind; but we can hardly speak of the "minds" of men. And yet after all it only needs a slight turn of phrase to make Anaxagoras "speak like a Christian." For the conception that we find in Dante (*Paradiso* i.) that it is only in the ordered relation of things to each other that the "exalted creatures," namely, angels and men, trace the impress of the Creator, almost verbally coincides with the conception of Anaxagoras that it is Mind in us that recognises the order of the universe as the utterance or expression of Mind.

Aristotle adds to the doctrine of Anaxagoras his own organic conception of man as a single being. Starting as usual from the concrete, and exercising his analytic faculty upon it, Aristotle conceives that the man himself is the reality, and that his soul, or vital functions, and his body, or material organism, can only be separated by an intellectual artifice. For the body is not a man's body at all if it is dead; and since the vital functionings are the vital functionings of the body, it seems to follow that if the body ceases to live, that is ceases to function vitally, the vital functions cease to be. There are not then a body and a life which are to be thought of as united, but a single *living body* which can be intellectually dissected, but not separated, into body and life. And consequently Aristotle wages perpetual war against the idea that

the soul is in the body as a sailor is in a boat, and he points out the quaintness of the idea that one body will do as well as another for the soul to be put into, just as a liquid can be put into any bottle. The life-functions of the human body are, at least to a certain point, analogous to the life-functions of a plant or an animal. You do not think of the life of a tree as something that might depart from the tree and go somewhere else; but you think of the tree as not being fully a tree unless, or until, it is functioning as a creature fully capable of nourishing itself by assimilation and of reproducing itself by fruit and seed. This full vitality is therefore the form of the tree, and to acquire and exercise it is the entelechy of the seed or sapling that is potentially but not actually a tree.[1] In the same way the higher functioning of the human soul is the entelechy or form of the organised human body, which is not a human body at all until it is so functioning.

And yet Aristotle does not push this conception consistently through to the end. The highest aspect of the soul, that is to say intelligence, mind, or νοῦς, is, after all, something different from and more than the mere functioning of the organised body, for it is not the function of any organ or set of organs. This belief is no doubt ultimately based on the ineradicable sense that Mind or consciousness is the ultimate reality, through which we

[1] Cf. p. 23.

become cognisant of all else, so that however we may be tempted by the observation of the evolution of the individual being, or the comparison of all the orders of being amongst themselves, to regard even the highest vital functions as rising out of organised matter, we cannot but feel that this deduction is fundamentally illegitimate; especially if we accept Aristotle's teleology, and regard the goal as explaining the evolution which leads to it, and the actualised as logically antecedent to the merely potential; which can only actualise itself under the influence of the actual. A fully developed tree logically precedes the potentiality of the seed, and actual Mind, *intellectus agens*, must precede, and is implied in, the possibility of mind functions in an organism, *intellectus possibilis*.

But whatever may be the ultimate grounds of Aristotle's shrinking from the full carrying out of his organic conception of the soul, in all its aspects, as the functioning of the body and nothing more, he presents us with a most delightful ground (or should we perhaps say excuse?) for this faith. If you see an exceedingly bright light you are dazzled, and can no longer see a faint light. If you hear a terrific crash your ear is stunned and a faint sound which follows it cannot be perceived. These and such like phenomena show that vision and hearing depend on a material organ, which can be unhinged and thrown out of gear by excess of the stimulating cause. But if you see a great

dominating and penetrating truth, so far from preventing you from recognising small truths, it instantly quickens the keenness of your mental vision for the perception of the smallest shades of distinction. There is then no material organ of thought which can be unhinged by excess of truth.

How comes it, then, that Aristotle can still speak of the soul as the " form " or " entelechy " of the body? Well, the human body has its entelechy, or being-at-its-goalness, in coming into such relations with the mind-principle, or νοῦς, as shall develop and extend its vital functionings to this higher region, in which they are no longer directly dependent on its physical organs, though still continuous with the sense impressions which those organs supply. A man's personality then will be constituted not by his soul, or the aggregate of his vital functions, so much as by a sort of contact between his higher organic functions and the cosmic νοῦς, or Mind, the immaterial principle of the universe. And when the body is dissolved and its vital functions cease, this contact being necessarily broken, there can be no personal immortality of the individual, in spite of there having been an immortal element, separable from the body, in his soul during his life.

So at least I understand the condensed and mysterious chapters in the third book of the *De Anima*, round which a sea of controversy has raged. If I am right it will not seem unnatural

that when Aristotle discusses the relation of the already active and therefore creative intellect to the potential intellect which it develops, there should be some uncertainty as to how far this active intellect is to be identified with the cosmic νοῦς, and how far it is itself a faculty or function of the human soul. In my own opinion Aristotle, at least as reflected in the utterances of the *De Anima* as we have it, takes a somewhat vague position in this respect, and represents the active intellect, or *intellectus agens*, as having both cosmic and personal aspects. At any rate he gave room to his commentators to appeal with conviction to his authority, and argue with honest zeal, on either side of the question. Some of the Greek commentators, and the Arabians, Avicenna and Averrhoes, take the cosmic view of the *intellectus agens*, and regard it either as, ultimately, God himself or, under Neoplatonic influences, as one of the successive emanations from God. And Averrhoes, who connected these successive emanations with the heavenly spheres, regarded the *intellectus agens* as specifically related to the sphere of the moon. But, in distinction from Avicenna, Averrhoes went still further, and regarded not only the *intellectus agens*, but the *intellectus possibilis*, or, as he called it, the *intellectus materialis*, that is to say the "potential intellect" capable of development and progressive knowledge—in fact just "the intellect" as we understand the word when we speak

of the "intellect of man"—as another impersonal and cosmic emanation specially appropriated to the race of men. So that the only rudiment of intelligence proper to each man himself was the *intellectus passibilis* or "passive intellect," situated in the middle chamber of the brain, which in itself amounted to little more than the "common sense" of Aristotle and Avicenna. It furnished a kind of meeting-place in which the *intellectus agens* and the *intellectus materialis* might establish some kind of connection with it and might react upon each other.

Thus the possibility of personal immortality was remoter from the scheme of Averrhoes than from that of Aristotle, and he himself, in distinction from Avicenna, expressly repudiated belief in it. Moreover his celebrated doctrine of the unity of the intellect (*recipiens* or *materialis*=the scholastic *possibilis*) was an abomination to the Christian Aristotelians, for it need hardly be said that the Christian interpreters of Aristotle took a diametrically opposed line. Instead of developing the cosmic aspect of the *intellectus agens* with Avicenna, or extending it even to the *intellectus possibilis* with Averrhoes, they ignored whatever cosmic aspect it really wore in Aristotle's work altogether, and understood by it nothing whatever but the power of abstraction which specifically characterises the human mind. The *intellectus possibilis* or potential intellect, on the other hand, was the

faculty of storing, comparing, and combining intellectual abstractions and building up the whole structure of thought. There was, in a word, one mind, with the faculty alike of abstracting and storing, and the terms *intellectus agens* and *intellectus possibilis* were names not for different intellects but for different powers or capacities of the intellect. But it was quite possible to use the more general of the two terms, *intellectus possibilis*, or potential intellect, for the human intelligence at large, with all its faculties and powers. And so indeed the term is generally employed. For the intellect of man is, as we have seen, potentially capable of growth and development, whereas the intellect of the angels is from the first actualised to its full capacity.

But what of the nature of the soul itself, and its connection with the body, in the view of the Christian scholars? They themselves never questioned that they were Aristotelians, and they adopted the Aristotelian phrase that the soul is the "entelechy" or the "form" of the body without misgiving. But as a matter of fact they firmly held, with the Platonists and all Christian teachers, that the soul is an entity, with an independent existence of its own, capable of surviving the death and dissolution of the body. How is this belief to be reconciled with their Aristotelian language? For the form of material things is one and the same for the whole species, and moreover it cannot

exist apart from the matter in which it inheres. The difficulty existed, as we have seen,[1] for Aristotle himself, but it threatened to become quite unmanageable for the Schoolmen. We can best trace their attempts to deal with it by examining their doctrine of the development of the embryo. At a certain period after conception the embryo acquires the lowest form of life, corresponding to that of a vegetable. Under this vital form it is gradually disposed to receive the higher form of animal life. At the given moment the vegetable form vanishes, and an animal form takes its place at the same instant, so that there is no interval at which it is formless. And note that these successive forms, vegetable and animal, are not separately created and then imposed upon the material, but rise in it when it is ripe to assume them. The progressive disposition for the reception of the ultimate or human form continues, but when the right moment arrives God creates a soul which, though a form, is unlike other forms. It is a being, and therefore capable of continued existence (though not strictly as a form) when the body is dissolved. Aquinas is a good enough Aristotelian to maintain with perfect precision that the soul is not made apart from the body and then put into it. It informs the (rightly disposed) first matter which thereon ceases to bear the animal form which it had before; the new form embrac-

[1] See above pp. 170 *sqq.*

ing all the functional activities of animal and vegetable life—a doctrine which is distinctly implied by Dante also.[1] But he is a good enough Christian to maintain with equal preciseness that the soul has its own independent existence and individuality which, though created as the form of the body, can survive its dissolution. He argues elaborately and acutely on the subject, but when all is said and done the statement that the soul differs from other forms in so essential a particular is virtually equivalent to abandoning the tenet that it is in any true sense a form at all. This, however, Aquinas will never admit. And undoubtedly his Aristotelian doctrine that the soul is the form or entelechy of the body exercises a potent influence on his theory that as the soul, considered in the abstract, is created with express reference to the human body in the abstract, so each individual soul is created with direct reference to that particular individual body of which it is the form. As the embryo, until the moment that it becomes an animal, is being disposed to take the animal form, so also until the moment when it becomes a man it is being disposed to take the human form, or soul. And thus to support and feed the full extent of life and vital functioning which humanity implies may be described not unnaturally as the entelechy or being-at-its-goal-ness of the body, though it is harder to

[1] See *Paradiso*, xiii. especially lines 67-84.

regard that functioning itself as really being the body's form.[1]

Such in general outline are the psychology and theory of the soul that lie behind the seventeenth, eighteenth, and twenty-fifth cantos of the *Purgatorio*, and the whole body of Dante's work.

[1] For passages in illustration of the positions now laid down see the appendix to the present chapter, p. 203.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VI

Notes to pp. 154-178

Sense and intelligence as the two principles of cognition: "Sensibilia non sunt secundum se intelligibilia."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 96.

"Intellectus noster speciem intelligibilem abstrahit a principiis individuantibus: unde species intelligibilis nostri intellectus non potest esse similitudo principiorum individualium. Et propter hoc, intellectus noster singularia non cognoscit."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xiv. art. 11, ad primum.

Compare the passage quoted on p. 204.

The *species sensibiles* or *phantasmata* are presented to the *intellectus possibilis* by the senses at first, but afterwards it calls them up on its own motion in order to support it in dealing with its *species intelligibiles* that were originally abstracted from them.

"Intellectus enim possibilis, sicut et quaelibet substantia, operatur secundum modum suae naturae. Secundum autem naturam suam est forma corporis; unde intelligit quidem immaterialia, sed inspicit ea in aliquo materiali; cujus signum est quod, in doctrinis universalibus, exempla particularia ponuntur, in quibus quod dicitur inspiciatur. Alio ergo modo se habet intellectus possibilis ad phantasma quo indiget, ante speciem intelligibilem: et alio modo postquam recepit

speciem intelligibilem; ante enim indiget eo ut ab eo accipiat speciem intelligibilem, unde se habet ad intellectum possibilem ut objectum movens, sed post speciem in eo receptam, indiget eo quasi instrumento sive fundamento suae speciei, unde se habet ad phantasmata sicut causa efficiens: secundum enim imperium intellectus, formatur in imaginatione phantasma conveniens tali speciei intelligibili in quo resplendet species intelligibilis sicut exemplar in exemplato sive in imagine. Si ergo intellectus possibilis semper habuisset species, nunquam compararetur ad phantasmata sicut recipiens ad objectum motivum."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 73.

Compare further, on the two modes of cognition in man, and the one only mode in angels: "Per speciem intelligibilem fit intellectus intelligens actu, sicut per speciem sensibilem sensus est actu sentiens."—*Contra Gentiles*, I. 46. And: "Anima autem humana est inferior ordine naturae quam substantia separata; ipsa autem cognoscitiva est universalium et singularium per duo principia, scilicet per sensum et intellectum. Substantia igitur separata, quae est altior, cognoscit utrumque altiori modo per unum principium, scilicet intellectum."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 100.

By us even the axioms are not recognised except by abstraction from individual cases.

"Ipsorum principiorum cognitio in nobis ex sensibilibus causatur; nisi enim aliquod totum sensu percepissemus, non possemus intelligere quod totum esset majus parte, sicut nec caecus natus aliquid percipit de coloribus."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 83.

Verities themselves are eternal, but "patet species intelligibiles, quibus anima nostra intelligit veritatem, de novo nobis advenire ex phantasmatibus per intellectum agentem."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 84.

Cf. *infra* p. 183.

The *intelligentia agens* is not a faculty of the individual soul according to Avicenna.

"Dicemus quod anima humana prius est intelligens in potentia, deinde fit intelligens in effectu. Omne autem quod exit de potentia ad effectum non exit nisi per causam, que habet illud in effectu, et extrahit ad illum. Ergo hec est causa per quam anime nostre in rebus intelligibilibus exeunt de potentia ad effectum. Sed causa dandi formam intelligibilem non est nisi intelligentia in effectu, penes quam sunt principia formarum intelligibilium abstractarum. Cuius comparatio ad animas nostras est sicut comparatio solis ad visus nostros."—*De Anima*, V. v. *De intelligentia agente*, etc.

Whereas neither the *intellectus agens* nor the *intellectus materialis* (*possibilis*) is a faculty of the individual man according to Averrhoes. "Opiniati sumus ex hoc sermone quod intellectus materialis est unicus omnibus hominibus."—*De Anima*, III. com. 5, post med. (Ed. Venice, 1624-25).

The *intellectus agens* is a yet higher *ens*. "Immo debes scire quod respectus intellectus agentis ad istum intellectum est respectus lucis ad diaphanum: . . . Quemadmodum enim lux est perfectio diaphani, sic intellectus agens est perfectio intellectus materialis."—*De Anima*, III. com. 5, prop. fin.

It is connected with the orbit of the moon. 'Intellectus autem agens ordinatur ex ultimo,

horum in ordine: et ponamus ipsum esse motorem orbis Lunae."—*Epitomes in Libros Metaphysicorum, Tract. Quartus* (in the section, *De ordine intellectus agentis*).

The constituent and also the individuating principle of man is the *intellectus passibilis*. "Et per istum intellectum, quem vocat Aristoteles passibilem, diversantur homines. . . . Et per istum intellectum differt homo ab aliis animalibus. Et, si non, tunc necesse esset ut continuatio intellectus agentis et recipientis cum animalibus esset eodem modo."—*De Anima*, III. text. 20, ad fin.

It is identical with the *virtus cogitativa* or, practically, the *sensus communis* of Aristotle and the Schoolmen. "Et iam diximus quod virtus cogitativa non est intellectus materialis, neque intellectus qui est in actu, sed est virtus particularis materialis, . . . quam Aristoteles vocavit intellectum passibilem,[1] et dixit eam esse generabilem et corruptibilem. Et hoc est manifestum de ea, cum habet instrumentum terminatum, scilicet medium ventriculum cerebri."—*De Anima*, III. text. 33, ad fin.

Whereas the *intellectus materialis* has no organ, as is elaborately proved (after Aristotle) in sections 6 and 7 of the Commentary. Compare *Purgatorio*, xxv. 61-66. Individuals then perish with their individuating *intellectus*. It is only the *species humana* that is *aeterna* (*De Anima*, III. text 5, post med.), whereas Avicenna's *De Anima*, V. iv. is headed: "*Quod anima non desinit esse, neque transformatur*

[1] *Sic lege*. *Possibilem* in the Venice edition is a misprint. This latter term is not employed by Averrhoes, in whose writings ***materialis*** takes its place.

in alia corpora," and reaches the conclusion: "Restat ergo ut nullius eorum [sc. corporis et animae] esse pendeat ex altero. Esse autem anime pendet a principiis aliis que non permutantur, neque destruuntur. Dicemus ergo quod nulla causa destruit animam aliquo modo."

Thomas repeatedly defends the "peripatetic" or Aristotelian-Scholastic theory that both the *intellectus agens* and the *intellectus possibilis* (*materialis*) are faculties of the individual human soul, and that the *agens* is no other than the power of abstraction. See his Opusculum XV. *De Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas*, and compare *Contra Gentiles*, II. 73 and 76; and further: "Intellectus enim possibilis et agens in anima intellectiva inveniuntur, propter hoc quod accipit cognitionem intellectivam a sensibilibus; nam intellectus agens est qui facit species, a sensibilibus acceptas, esse intelligibiles; intellectus autem possibilis est in potentia ad omnes formas sensibilium cognoscendas."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 96. And: "Manifestum est autem quod in humana natura Deus plantavit non solum intellectum possibilem, sed etiam intellectum agentem. . . . Propria autem operatio intellectus agentis est facere species intelligibiles actu, abstrahendo eas a phantasmatibus." —*Sum. Theol.* III. qu. ix. art. 4, corp.

On the discontinuity of forms and the contemporaneous passing of one form and coming of another: "Secundum enim hanc positionem sequeretur quod aliqua virtus eadem numero nunc esset anima vegetabilis tantum et postmodum anima sensitiva, et sic ipsa forma substantialis continue magis ac magis perficeretur; et ulterius

sequeretur quod non simul, sed successive, educeretur forma substantialis de potentia in actum, et ulterius quod generatio esset motus continuus, sicut et alteratio; quae omnia sunt impossibilia in natura."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 89.

On the succession of forms: " Et sciendum, quod aliter est in generatione hominis vel animalis, et aliter in generatione aeris vel aquae. Nam generatio aeris est simplex, cum in tota generatione aeris non appareant nisi duae formae substantiales, una quae abjicitur et alia quae inducitur, quod totum fit simul in uno instanti: unde ante introductionem formae aeris semper manet ibi forma aquae; nec sunt ibi dispositiones ad formam aeris. In generatione autem animalis apparent diversae formae substantiales, cum primo appareat sperma, et postea sanguis, et sic deinceps quousque sit forma hominis vel animalis. Et sic oportet quod hujusmodi generatio non sit simplex, sed continens in se plures generationes et corruptiones. Non enim potest esse quod una et eadem forma substantialis gradatim educatur in actum, ut ostensum est. Sic ergo per virtutem formativam quae a principio est in semine, abjecta forma spermatis, inducitur alia forma; qua abjecta, iterum inducatur alia: et sic primo inducatur anima vegetabilis; deinde ea abjecta, inducatur anima sensibilis et vegetabilis simul; qua abjecta, inducatur non per virtutem praedictam sed a creante, anima quae simul est rationalis sensibilis et vegetabilis. Et sic dicendum est secundum hanc opinionem, quod embrio antequam habeat animam rationalem, vivit et habet animam, qua abjecta, inducitur anima rationalis. Et sic non sequitur

duas animas esse in eodem corpore, nec animam rationalem traduci cum semine."—*De Pot.* qu. iii. art. 9, ad nonum.

As to the special character of the *anima* as *forma:* Other forms are drawn *from* the (suitably disposed) matter, but in this case it is the matter which is drawn *to* the soul-form. "Dicendum, quod quanto aliqua forma est altior, tanto plus indiget a potentiori agente produci; unde cum anima humana sit altissima omnium formarum, producitur a potentissimo agente, scilicet Deo; alio tamen modo quam aliae formae a quibuscumque agentibus. Nam aliae formae non sunt subsistentes . . . unde fieri earum est secundum quod materia vel subjectum reducitur de potentia in actum: et hoc est formam educi de potentia materiae absque additione alicujus extrinseci. Sed ipsa anima habet esse subsistens; unde sibi proprie debetur fieri; et corpus trahitur ad esse ejus. Et propter hoc dicitur, quod est ab extrinseco, et quod non educitur de potentia materiae." —*De Spir. Creat.* art. 2, ad octavum.

Compare the more elaborate passage, *Contra Gentiles*, II. 68. Further: "Dicendum quod anima illud esse in quo ipsa subsistit, communicat materiae corporali, ex qua et anima intellectiva fit unum, ita quod illud esse quod est totius compositi, est etiam ipsius animae. Quod non accidit in aliis formis, quae non sunt subsistentes. Et propter hoc anima humana remanet in suo esse, destructo corpore: non autem aliae formae."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. lxxvi. art. 1, ad quintum.

It is the *prima materia*, and not the already informed foetus that is informed by the *anima.*

"Dicendum quod, sicut ex praedictis patet, forma perfectior virtute continet quidquid est inferiorum formarum. Et ideo una et eadem existens, perficit materiam secundum diversos perfectionis gradus. —*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. lxxvi. art. 6, ad primum.

And as the human soul specifically informs the human body specifically, so a human soul individually informs a human body individually, and is numerically individuated by its *habitudo* to such individual body. "Sicut enim animae humanae secundum suam speciem competit quod tali corpori secundum speciem uniatur, ita haec anima differt ab illa numero solo, ex hoc quod ad aliud numero corpus habitudinem habet: et sic individuantur animae humanae, et per consequens intellectus possibilis qui est potentia animae humanae, secundum corpora, non quasi individuatione a corporibus causata."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 75.

Compare the passages cited from *Sum. Theol.* I. qu. lxxvi. art. 4, on p. 81.

CHAPTER VII

HELL

In the remaining chapters of this book, and especially in this present chapter and the next, I shall try to make Dante's inmost conception of life stand out in sharper relief from the background of current beliefs that support it, by noting some of the special features that characterise his treatment of the essential meaning of hell and purgatory. Some words must naturally be added on heaven, but since Dante and Aquinas, however widely they differ in their handling of this subject, are essentially at one in their conception of it, the comparison with Aquinas throws less light on the special characteristics of Dante's world-thought here than it yields in the other *cantiche*.

Dante himself tells us[1] that the "Comedy" is essentially a practical treatise, and is speculative only incidentally; and as we penetrate further into its spirit we realise more and more clearly that the real pre-occupation of Dante's mind as he wrote the "Comedy" was neither scientific nor philosophical, but at once artistic and (in the fullest Hebrew sense) prophetic. The beginner is, of course, often dashed by the display of learning he

[1] *Epistle to Can Grande*, § xvi. lines 271-281.

finds in Dante and the demands made upon his own (probable non-existent) erudition; and the impression is often retained by more advanced students that Dante carries science and philosophy to the furthest limits which had been reached in his age. It is only after detailed study that we learn to appreciate the artistic tact and self-restraint with which he refrains from pushing his science, philosophy, or even theology, a step beyond the boundaries within which they can support his ethical, religious, and poetical purposes; and at the same time his boldness and independence in handling them, and the moulding ascendency of his own mind.

Thus in his astronomy he deliberately ignores, for the sake of simplicity and picturesque effect, the distinction between the constellations and the signs of the zodiac, although he was perfectly well aware of the cause of the discrepancy in what he thought of as the proper motion of the stars and what modern astronomy speaks of as the precession of the equinoxes. And I agree with Dr. Moore (though not in detail) in his general thesis that the whole astronomical scheme of the "Comedy" is based on popular approximations (in the case of the moon an extremely rough one) which Dante knew to be scientifically incorrect. He used his science to give vividness and firmness to his pictorial presentation of the journey, carrying it just as far as he thought an educated man could follow with-

out an appeal to books of reference, but no further. He did not use his pictorial presentations of the journey as an excuse for inveigling the reader into the study of the technical details of astronomy, and still less as an excuse for the display of his own learning.

And it is just the same with his theology, his philosophy, and his technical psychology. Perplexing as the uninitiated may sometimes find his treatment of these subjects, the student of Scholastic Philosophy will be impressed by the infallible instinct, or art, with which he abstains from pushing intellectual analysis to the point at which it would divert instead of stimulating the mind, and would obscure rather than illuminate moral and spiritual issues. He is content to accept the mystery of the Trinity, for example, without trying how far the plummet of the human mind can reach into the abyss of the infinite. He is content to look forward to the time when the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ shall be as obvious to the beatified vision as the axiomatic law of contradictories, and meanwhile to accept it by faith.

But there is more than this. Dante not only knows where to stop himself, but he knows where science stops. He knows that by trying to explain what is inexplicable you may not only fail, but may wrench the instrument of reason itself in the process. Such at least I take to be the meaning of that passage in the early part of the *Paradiso*

which has dismayed so many readers by its apparently irrelevant intrusion into heaven. I mean the long and somewhat intricate disquisition on the dark portions of the surface of the moon. Dante's purpose evidently is to show that when he had left the earth one of the first lessons he had to learn was that if you try to explain the things of heaven by the laws of the laboratory you will not only fail in your attempt, but you will strain and violate the laws of the very science that you put to a task which is not its own. Your science will not only be ineffective as an instrument, but it will be bad as science.[1]

Nowhere are the happy effects of this self-restraint, or deliberate sense of the limits past which philosophy cannot go (whichever in this particular case it is), more happy than in Dante's treatment of what he regards as the central problem of the moral world, the freedom, namely, of the human will.

Aquinas and Dante are equally emphatic in their insistence on the fact of the freedom of the will. Without it the reality of the moral life disappears, rewards and punishments are impossible, and the very idea of divine justice perishes.

Many passages in the "Comedy" will occur to the reader's mind in which Dante dwells upon this

[1] It is perhaps a little unfortunate that in point of fact Dante's science as to the moon in the *Convivio* was on the whole a little better than Beatrice's in the *Paradiso* that corrects it. But that, of course, does not affect the principle that Dante is illustrating.

theme. In one of his letters he speaks of the astrologer, who thinks that he can predict events, as in the highest degree blasphemous and injurious, because he implies that man's actions are not under his own control, and that free will is illusory;[1] but the most striking illustration of all is in that early canto of the *Paradiso* in which Dante, having seen, in the Sphere of the Moon, certain nuns who had broken their vows "against their will" is haunted by two questions. The first is: If they were compelled to break their vows, does it accord with God's justice that they should be shorn of some portion of the bliss of fruition that they would otherwise have enjoyed? And the other is: Seeing that these inconstant souls (if such indeed they are) abide in the inconstant moon, can it be true, after all, that Plato is right in teaching that the souls derive their moral qualities from the planets from which they have descended into the human body, and that they afterwards revert to the planets from which they came? Beatrice sees these two perplexities in his mind, and also that he is at a loss which question to ask first, like a hare between two hounds not knowing which way to turn. So she says she will treat first of the one that has most poison in it. Now remember what these two questions are; one concerns the justice of God, and the other the relation of the planets to the origin and destiny of the soul. The one with

[1] *Epistle* viii. *Cardinalibus Italicis*, lines 38-41.

most poison in it is the one about the planets. The other can wait. And this is because the question why these nuns lose a part of their glory only concerns a detail in God's administration. But if you are to suppose that a man's moral character is determined by the planet from which his soul comes and also that his future state is determined by his moral character, then you have undermined the very conception of divine justice itself, because you have undermined the conception of free will, on which the justice of the whole of God's ordinances rests.

Now Aquinas, as I have said, attaches the same importance to the free will, and for the same reason. But there is this difference, that whereas Dante only carries his analysis to a certain point, Aquinas urges it to the very end; and the consequence is that whereas Dante's treatment of the subject is a perpetual appeal to our inherent sense that we are in command of our own destiny, and that neither the movements of the Heavens nor any other combination of circumstances or events can rob us of the liberty which we have in God or take our fate out of our own hands, Aquinas, on the other hand, analyses the freedom of the will till he has analysed it away, and leaves us with the sense not that we are really and ultimately responsible for our own choice, but that we choose, even when we choose wrong, in obedience to the nevitable and unfathomable will of God.

It will be instructive to follow out this contrast between Aquinas and Dante. According to Aquinas man selects both his ends (subject to his controlling desire for blessedness [1]) and his means, and never takes one course rather than another except because he prefers it. Moreover, the action of man differs from the fixed and determined course of nature because it is regulated not by antecedents but by consequents. In the mechanical order the thing that happens is rigidly determined by the things that have happened, and is absolutely unaffected by what is going to happen as a consequent; whereas even in the animal world it is the anticipation of pleasure or of pain, that is to say, something which is going to happen, that determines the conduct of the brute in many respects. Moreover, man may imaginatively conceive of all kinds of possibilities which are not directly presented to him, and may select among them one towards which his action shall be directed. He is therefore free, in the sense that he is not bound down to a predetermined course by his past, or limited in his choice by the suggestions actually made by present things to his senses, but is capable of selecting among a variety of open courses by considering the future. And seeing that he selects the one course or the other because he prefers it, he is not only free, but responsible in his freedom. If he chooses the evil course he chooses it because he prefers it, and he

[1] Cf. p. 139.

deserves the penalty attaching to this evil preference. He cannot say that he did it in spite of himself because he chose to do it, and he chose to do it because he preferred it.

But when we push the inquiry further, and ask why of all these open alternatives he chooses the one rather than the other, we are assured indeed that although all kinds of predisposing causes may prompt or suggest the one course or the other, yet none of them can compel the choice. Neither physical habit nor any external influence, not even the movements of the heavens or the suggestions of demons, that raise all kinds of images in the imagination, nor the natural movements of the passions themselves, can have direct access to the will or can compel the choice by promptings or seductive suggestions. God alone can directly act upon the will, and either by prompting or refraining can determine the choice that it will make. But since God does prompt or refrain in every case the will actually makes its choice in obedience to the divine will. Thus after all, though Aquinas will never formulate it so, it amounts to this, that, although we do what we like, it is God that chooses what we shall like, and therefore it is he, not we, on whom the ultimate choice and its responsibility rest. What then comes of the freedom of the human will, undetermined by the past? Aquinas expressly states that it is in our power to will or not to will any action. Indeed he insists, in words, on

the reality of the freedom of the will, so often and so emphatically, that many of his modern readers still insist that he is not a determinist. But their case is hopeless. On examination our power to will or not to will reduces itself to this: In the mechanical succession of material events only one consequent of any given set of antecedents is possible within the limits of the nature of the material thing concerned. If a stone is released in free air, nothing is possible within the limits of its nature except that it should fall towards the centre of the earth. God could indeed make it rise, but that would be by miracle, superseding the nature of the stone and making it act counter thereto. But in the case of man there is no such natural, internal determination of the future by the past. So far as the intrinsic nature of man is concerned diverse courses are open, and God could urge him or suffer him to move along any one of the diverse possible routes without any violation of his nature or breach with the natural continuity of past and future. The freedom of man resolves itself then into the existence of open possibilities within the range of his natural powers, and the determination of his course by his own preferences. But his preferences themselves are ultimately determined by God.

And this doctrine relentlessly pushed home reveals its appalling significance in relation to the Aquinian doctrine of hell. We have seen that God wills his own goodness, including the communica-

tion of his goodness to other beings. These other beings must of necessity be finite, for could we conceive of the Infinite creating the Infinite there would still be but one Infinite, and so there could be no communication of the divine self to any other being. The created beings then to whom the divine goodness communicates itself must be finite; and the communication must be made under finite conditions, that is to say, in diversity and not in unity. God then must reveal his supreme excellence both in the form under which we conceive it as mercy and the form under which we conceive it as justice. Justice must manifest itself by the infliction of penalties. Penalties are due only to those who have averted their love from the divine goodness to lower things and made the evil choice. If the revelation of the divine goodness then is to be complete in its diversity, there must be material on which to demonstrate the divine justice. There must therefore be sin and hell. Thus hell is good, not in itself, but as an essential part of a good greater than its evil, the manifestation, namely, of God's goodness. What we call evil, therefore, is itself, from the higher point of view and in its connection and setting, good. The pains of hell are good, but with appalling candour Aquinas adds that they are not good for those who suffer them.

Thus we are bidden to think of the eternal hell, of impenitence and anguish, as involved and in-

cluded in the act by which God wills his own goodness. Thomas pushes his explanation of the free will and his explanation of hell so far as to carry the latter into the very central will of God. He does not leave it as a mystery, but represents it as something that should approve itself to the human reason and sense of fitness.[1]

Now note that Dante's treatment of the freedom of the will in the eighteenth canto of the *Purgatorio* is carried just to the point at which it removes the superficial objections, and no further. Both here and elsewhere he declares that the ineradicable feeling which every man has in his heart that he is indeed master of himself when he makes a deliberate choice is not an illusion. Suggestions cannot dominate him if he chooses to dominate them. Thus Dante's assertion of the doctrine of the free will is simply an appeal to our own direct consciousness of power, which it braces and strengthens in us. It so touches our manhood that we cannot for shame excuse ourselves by circumstance, or despair in the face of difficulty or opposition.

Thus Dante makes us feel that over a wide area of life, at any rate, man gets essentially not only what he deserves, but what he chooses; and that he neither deserves nor gets it except because he chooses it. And it is this conception of desert and choice that permeates Dante's whole treatment of

[1] See Postscript on pp. 268 *sqq.*

the awful theme of the *Inferno*. Aquinas and Dante are at one in representing the damned as impenitent. The former repeatedly declares that they do not repent of their sins, but only hate their punishment. But yet he frequently speaks of the "worm" or "gnawing" of conscience as a part of their torment. And this gives us the impression that he did not hold with so firm a grasp as Dante did the full consequences of their common principle that there has been no change in the sinner's sense of moral values. This is an essential feature of Dante's hell. The souls still have just the same preferences that they had on earth. Their scale of values remains unchanged. It is not that their repentance is unavailing, but that they do not repent. They curse the parents who begat them, or the accomplices that seduced or betrayed them, never their own inherently evil choice, for they still cling to it. There is shame in Dante's hell as well as shamelessness, but surely there is no room for the gnawing worm of conscience there.[1]

But so far the difference, if there really is one, between Dante and Aquinas, is hardly crucial; for all the principles that seem to exclude remorse from Dante's hell are fully accepted by Thomas. What really divides them is the moral relation in the thought of Dante, and the absence of any such relation in that of Aquinas, between the sin and the suffering. In characterising the physical anguish

[1] For illustrative extracts from Aquinas see pp. 203-212.

of hell, Aquinas deliberately and dispassionately applies all his lucid force of statement to explaining how horrible it is. The physical suffering of Christ upon the cross exceeded anything that any man on earth ever had or ever has suffered. But the pains both of purgatory and of hell exceed it, and the pains of hell are never-ending. But there is no other relation between the sinful preference and the punishment than that the one is inflicted on account of the other. The punishment is imposed upon the sinner by the sentence of a court simply on the ground that he deserves to be punished. Whereas almost every reader of Dante's *Inferno*, unless he is merely revolted or paralysed by a sense of horror, feels, vaguely at first perhaps, but with growing clearness and deepening awe as he finds his way to the heart of the poem, that whereas others have said and say, "By the justice of God the sinner gets what he *deserves*," Dante sees exactly what the sinner *chose*, and conceives of the Divine justice as giving him that.

Thus as Dante passes with Virgil by the morass in which the passionate are tearing each other, he sees bubbles rising and breaking upon the surface. His guide tells him that they rise from the throats of the sullen souls that lie in the mud at the bottom of the morass. They cry: "Dismal we were in the sweet air, which the sun gladdens, nursing in our hearts the sullen fumes. Now we are dismal in this black mud." That is what sulking is. It is a

deliberate and sustained effort to shut out the light and air of human fellowship, friendship, affection, and comfort, and to nurse sullen fumes in the heart, in the hope that this conduct may hurt others. "Dismal we were in the sweet air which the sun makes glad, nursing in our hearts the sullen fumes." That is what the sulky chose. To be in hell they have only to get it.

We must not try to push this principle that the punishment is simply the sin itself into every detail. The mistake is sometimes made. But you cannot compress the vision of a great poet into a single mechanical formula. Nevertheless, it is true that the atmosphere of Dante's hell is pervaded by this sense of congruousness between the fate of the sinners and their choice. A quite simple student of Dante once said to me, with a kind of bewilderment, speaking of the souls in hell, "But they don't seem to *want* to get out." It is true. Tortured and often resentful as they are, they are in a sense in a congenial atmosphere. The choice that brought them to hell and that finds its fitting environment there, is essentially their choice still. They are at home and in their own place in hell. In no true and integral sense do they "want to get out." It is this that gives its awful and august impersonality to Dante's hell. He speaks from time to time of the divine vengeance, it is true, but what he makes us feel is not the vengeance of God, but the shame of that evil

choice that makes a self-wrought hell for man,—and the infinite "pity of it."

Nothing can redeem the conception of an eternal hell shared alike by Aquinas and Dante, nor suppress our protest against the Christian Church having added to all the mysteries of the universe that we cannot escape the gratuitous horror of this dogma. But granted that neither of these great minds could escape it, the contrast between their treatments of it remains. It is true that Aquinas is very seldom thinking or writing about hell, for it occupies but a very minute fraction of his work; whereas Dante devotes one-third of his great poem to it. But Dante's treatment illuminates the whole subject of the evil choice, burning and freezing into our hearts the sense of the nature and meaning of sin itself. Whereas Aquinas only insists on the awfulness of its consequences. But above all, Dante does not explain hell, though he informs it with a solemn meaning. Aquinas does not make it mean anything; but he explains it as included in the act by which God wills his own goodness. And so Aquinas seems to carry hell into the very heart of our conception of the Divine Goodness, and the thought haunts us wherever we go in the vast and beautiful regions of his mind, until at last we deal with his explanation in the way in which he himself refuses to deal with hell—we come to think of its presence in his mind as a mystery, we refuse to take it with

us, and so at last we come to feel the tenderness of his piety and the beauty of his spiritual insight in spite of our knowing all the time that there is something in his mind which we cannot explain, and which, if we thought of it, would baffle and perplex our souls and smirch the beauty of the mind with which we are conversing. That beauty is real. The presence of that other thought, in its midst, is a mystery, and we forget it.

Now this is just what Dante seems to do with hell itself. Since he has not explained it, we can treat it as a mystery. In the ineffable Presence we forget it, but we carry with us the insight we gained as we put the spirits to question " in the deepest pool of the universe." And when the *thought* of hell is drowned in the light of heaven, the transfigured *experience* of hell is absorbed into it.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VII

Notes to pp. 192-198

A very small selection of passages from Aquinas may be given in support of the analysis of his conception of free will.

On its relation to the idea of merit, and the justice of rewards and punishments: "Si autem libertas voluntatis tolleretur, multa bona subtraherentur: tolleretur enim laus virtutis humanae, quae nulla est si homo libere non agat; tolleretur etiam justitia praemiantis et punientis, si non libere homo ageret bonum vel malum."—*Contra Gentiles*, III. 73.

Compare below pp. 205, 207. *Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xxiii. art. 1, and art. 3, corp.

As to the nature of the free will, judgment, or choice, itself: "Est enim quidam appetitus non consequens apprehensionem ipsius appetentis, sed alterius: et huiusmodi dicitur *appetitus naturalis*. Res enim naturales appetunt quod eis convenit secundum suam naturam, non per apprehensionem propriam, sed per apprehensionem instituentis naturam, ut in I libro dictum est.—Alius autem est appetitus consequens apprehensionem ipsius appetentis, sed ex necessitate, non ex iudicio libero. Et talis est *appetitus sensitivus* in brutis: qui tamen in hominibus aliquid libertatis participat, inquantum obedit rationi.—Alius autem est appetitus consequens apprehensionem appetentis secundum liberum iudicium. Et talis est

appetitus rationalis sive intellectivus, qui dicitur *voluntas*."—*Sum. Theol.* II. i. qu. xxvi. art. 1, corp.

For the stress laid on the "indeterminateness" of choice, and the precise conception of indeterminateness: "Judicii libertate carent aliqua, vel propter hoc quod nullum habent judicium, sicut quae cognitione carent, ut lapides et plantae; vel quia habent judicium a natura determinatum ad unum, sicut irrationalia animalia; naturali enim aestimatione judicat ovis lupum sibi nocivum, et ex hoc judicio fugit ipsum; similiter autem in aliis. Quaecumque igitur habent judicium de agendis non determinatum ad unum a natura, necesse est liberi arbitrii esse. Hujusmodi autem sunt omnia intellectualia; intellectus enim apprehendit non solum hoc vel illud bonum, sed ipsum bonum commune; unde cum intellectus per formam apprehensam moveat voluntatem, in omnibus autem movens et motum oporteat esse proportionata, voluntas substantiae intellectualis non erit determinata a natura nisi ad bonum commune. Quidquid igitur offertur sibi sub ratione boni poterit voluntas inclinari in illud, nulla determinatione naturali in contrarium prohibente. Omnia igitur intellectualia liberam voluntatem habent ex judicio intellectus venientem; quod est liberum arbitrium habere, quod definitur *liberum de ratione judicium*."—*Contra Gentiles*, II. 48.

In answer to the objection: "Videtur quod homines non praedestinentur a Deo. Dicit enim Damascenus, in II. libro: *Oportet cognoscere quod omnia quidem praecognoscit Deus, non autem omnia praedeterminat. Praecognoscit enim ea quae in nobis sunt: non autem praedeterminat ea.* Sed

merita et demerita humana sunt in nobis, inquantum sumus nostrorum actuum domini per liberum arbitrium. Ea ergo quae pertinent ad meritum vel demeritum, non praedestinantur a Deo. Et sic hominum praedestinatio tollitur."

Aquinas declares: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod Damascenus nominat *praedeterminationem* impositionem necessitatis; sicut est in rebus naturalibus, quae sunt praedeterminatae ad unum. Quod patet ex eo quod subdit: *non enim vult malitiam, neque compellit virtutem.* Unde praedestinatio non excluditur."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xxiii. art. 1.

Further: "Respondeo dicendum quod, cum electio sit prae-acceptio unius respectu alterius, necesse est quod electio sit respectu plurium quae eligi possunt. Et ideo in his quae sunt penitus determinata ad unum, electio locum non habet. Est autem differentia inter appetitum sensitivum et voluntatem, quia, ut ex praedictis patet, appetitus sensitivus est determinatus ad unum aliquid particulare secundum ordinem naturae; voluntas autem est quidem, secundum naturae ordinem, determinata ad unum commune, quod est bonum, sed indeterminate se habet respectu particularium bonorum. Et ideo proprie voluntatis est eligere: non autem appetitus sensitivi, qui solus est in brutis animalibus. Et propter hoc brutis animalibus electio non convenit."—*Sum. Theol.* II. i. qu. xiii. art. 2, corp. And: "Respondeo dicendum quod proprium liberi arbitrii est electio: ex hoc enim liberi arbitrii esse dicimur, quod possumus unum recipere, alio recusato, quod est eligere. Et ideo naturam liberi arbitrii ex electione

considerare oportet. Ad electionem autem concurrit aliquid ex parte cognitivae virtutis, et aliquid ex parte appetitivae: ex parte quidem cognitivae, requiritur consilium, per quod diiudicatur quid sit alteri praeferendum; ex parte autem appetitivae, requiritur quod appetendo acceptetur id quod per consilium diiudicatur."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. lxxxiii. art. 3, corp. But: "Non est autem distinctum quod est ex libero arbitrio, et ex praedestinatione; sicut nec est distinctum quod est ex causa secunda, et causa prima: divina enim providentia producit effectus per operationes causarum secundarum, ut supra dictum est. Unde et id quod est per liberum arbitrium, est ex praedestinatione." —*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xxiii. art. 5, corp.

The divine "reprobation" includes God's "will to permit" certain to fall into sin and damnation; nay, it is in the order of his providence that certain should actually do so. "Respondeo dicendum quod Deus aliquos reprobat. Dictum enim est supra quod praedestinatio est pars providentiae. Ad providentiam autem pertinet permittere aliquem defectum in rebus quae providentiae subduntur, ut supra dictum est. Unde, cum per divinam providentiam homines in vitam aeternam ordinentur, pertinet etiam ad divinam providentiam, ut permittat aliquos ab isto fine deficere. Et hoc dicitur *reprobare.*

"Sic igitur, sicut praedestinatio est pars providentiae respectu eorum qui divinitus ordinantur in aeternam salutem; ita reprobatio est pars providentiae respectu illorum qui ab hoc fine decidunt. Unde reprobatio non nominat prae-

scientiam tantum: sed aliquid addit secundum rationem, sicut et providentia, ut supra dictum est. Sicut enim praedestinatio includit voluntatem conferendi gratiam et gloriam, ita reprobatio includit voluntatem permittendi aliquem cadere in culpam, et inferendi damnationis poenam pro culpa."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xxiii. art. 3, corp.

On the ultimate dependence of our choice on God's will: "Dominium autem quod habet voluntas supra suos actus, per quod in ejus est potestate velle vel non velle, excludit determinationem virtutis ad unum et violentiam causae exterius agentis; non autem excludit influentiam superioris causae, a qua est ei esse et operari. Et sic remanet causalitas in causa prima, quae Deus est, respectu motuum voluntatis."—*Contra Gentiles*, I. 68.

This does not mean that those who are "permitted" to incur damnation are also permitted to escape it; for they could only escape it by grace and they can do nothing of themselves to earn grace. "Praeparatio hominis ad gratiam habendam, quaedam est simul cum ipsa infusione gratiae. Et talis operatio est quidem meritoria; sed non gratiae, quae iam habetur, sed gloriae, quae nondum habetur.—Est autem alia praeparatio gratiae imperfecta, quae aliquando praecedit donum gratiae gratum facientis, quae tamen est a Deo movente. Sed ista non sufficit ad meritum, nondum homine per gratiam iustificato: quia nullum meritum potest esse nisi ex gratia. . . . Cum homo ad gratiam se praeparare non possit nisi Deo eum praeveniente et movente ad bonum, non refert utrum subito vel paulatim aliquis ad perfectam

praeparationem perveniat."—*Sum. Theol.* II. i. qu. cxii. art. 2, ad primum, etc.

God, accordingly, is himself the cause of the blindness which constitutes that very impediment to grace, because of the presence of which he permits men to incur damnation. "Est autem considerandum quod Deus est causa universalis illuminationis animarum, secundum illud Ioan i., *Erat lux vera quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum*, sicut sol est universalis causa illuminationis corporum. Aliter tamen et aliter: nam sol agit illuminando per necessitatem naturae; Deus autem agit voluntarie, per ordinem suae sapientiae. Sol autem, licet quantum est de se omnia corpora illuminet, si quod tamen impedimentum inveniat in aliquo corpore, relinquit illud tenebrosum: sicut patet de domo cuius fenestrae sunt clausae. Sed tamen illius obscurationis nullo modo causa est sol, non enim suo iudicio agit ut lumen interius non immittat: sed causa eius est solum ille qui claudit fenestram. Deus autem proprio iudicio lumen gratiae non immittit illis in quibus obstaculum invenit. Unde causa subtractionis gratiae est non solum ille qui ponit obstaculum gratiae, sed etiam Deus, qui suo iudicio gratiam non apponit. Et per hunc modum Deus est causa excaecationis, et aggravationis aurium, et obdurationis cordis."—*Sum. Theol.* II. i. qu. lxxix. art. 3, corp.

Aquinas maintains, indeed, in words, that if the reprobate falls into this or that specific sin it is of his own free choice that he does so: "Ad tertium dicendum quod reprobatio Dei non subtrahit aliquid de potentia reprobati. Unde, cum dicitur

quod reprobatus non potest gratiam adipisci, non est hoc intelligendum secundum impossibilitatem absolutam, sed secundum impossibilitatem conditionatam: sicut supra dictum est quod praedestinatum necesse est salvari, necessitate conditionata, quae non tollit libertatem arbitrii. Unde, licet aliquis non possit gratiam adipisci qui reprobatur a Deo, tamen quod in hoc peccatum vel illud labatur, ex eius libero arbitrio contingit. Unde et merito sibi imputatur in culpam."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xxiii. art. 3. But this is to be interpreted in the light of the analysis on pp. 204 *sq.* It is not *impossible to his nature* to act otherwise *if he preferred it.* That he does not prefer it is due to God's providence, as is evident from the following very explicit passage (as well as many others on the relation of Providence to contingency and voluntary actions, *e.g. Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xix. art. 8, corp.; I. qu. xxiii. art. 2; *Contra Gentiles*, I. 96; III. 73): "Item, Deus non solum dat rebus virtutem, sed etiam nulla res potest propria virtute agere, nisi agat in virtute ipsius, ut supra ostensum est. Ergo homo non potest virtute voluntatis sibi data uti, nisi inquantum agit in virtute Dei. Illud autem in cujus virtute agens agit est causa non solum virtutis, sed etiam actus; quod in artifice apparet, in cujus virtute agit instrumentum, etiam quod ab hoc artifice propriam formam non accipit, sed solum ab ipso applicatur ad actum. Deus igitur est causa nobis, non solum voluntatis, sed etiam volendi.

"Amplius, Perfectius invenitur ordo in spiritualibus quam in corporalibus. In corporalibus autem omnis motus causatur a primo motu. Oportet

igitur quod in spiritualibus omnis motus voluntatis prima voluntate causetur, quae est voluntas Dei.

" Adhuc, Superius ostensum est; quod Deus est causa omnis actionis et operatur in omni agente. Est igitur causa motuum voluntatis."—*Contra Gentiles*, III. 89.[1]

We cannot go behind the will of God and ask why he extends grace to some and withholds it from others. " Cum autem Deus hominum qui in eisdem peccatis detinentur hos quidem praeveniens convertat, illos autem sustineat sive permittat secundum ordinem rerum procedere, non est ratio inquirenda quare hos convertat et non illos; hoc enim ex simplici ejus voluntate dependet, sicut ex simplici ejus voluntate processit quod, cum omnia fierent ex nihilo, quaedam facta sunt aliis digniora, et sicut ex simplici voluntate procedit artificis ut ex eadem materia similiter disposita quaedam vasa format ad nobiles usus et quaedam ad ignobiles. Hinc est quod Apostolus dicit: *Annon habet potestatem figulus luti ex eadem massa facere aliud quidem vas in honorem, aliud vero in contumeliam?* Rom. ix. 21."—*Contra Gentiles*, III. 161. And: " Ad secundum dicendum, quod luto non est magis debitum quod ex eo formentur vasa nobilia quam ignobilia; sed cum ex luto formatum est vas nobile, nobilitati illius vasis est debitum ut ad usum conveniens deputetur. Similiter quod Deus talem creaturam producat qualem voluerit, indifferens est ad rationem justitiae: sed quod, aliqua natura producta, ei attribuatur quod illi naturae competit, hoc ad ejus justitiam pertinet; et contrarium ejus justitiae repugnaret: et similiter

[1] See Postscript, pp. 269 *sqq.*

indifferens est quantum ad justitiam ejus ut det gratiam vel non det, cum donum gratiae non sit naturae debitum; sed postquam gratiam contulit, quae est merendi principium, ad judicium ejus pertinet ut pro meritis praemia reddat; et sic ex suppositione voluntatis justitia causatur."—*Com. in Sententias*, IV. *Dist.* XLVI. qu. i. art. 2, quaest. 4, sol. 1.

Hell and damnation are involved in God's willing his own goodness: "Multa bona sunt in rebus, quae, nisi mala essent, locum non haberent; sicut non esset patientia justorum, si non esset malignitas persequentium; nec esset locus justitiae vindicativae, si delicta non essent."—*Contra Gentiles*, III. 71.

"Nullum autem bonum Deus magis vult quam suam bonitatem: vult tamen aliquod bonum magis quam aliud quoddam bonum. Unde malum culpae, quod privat ordinem ad bonum divinum, Deus nullo modo vult. Sed malum naturalis defectus, vel malum poenae vult, volendo aliquod bonum, cui coniungitur tale malum: sicut, volendo iustitiam, vult poenam; et volendo ordinem naturae servari, vult quaedam naturaliter corrumpi."—*Sum. Theol.* I. qu. xix. art. 9, corp.

Cf. *supra* pp. 206 *sq.*

Though good, they are not good for the damned. In answer to the contention: "Videtur quod excaecatio et obduratio semper ordinentur ad salutem eius qui excaecatur et obduratur," we read: "Dicendum quod omnia mala quae Deus facit vel permittit fieri, ordinantur in aliquod bonum: non tamen semper in bonum eius in quo est malum, sed quandoque ad bonum alterius, vel etiam totius universi. Sicut culpam tyrannorum

ordinavit in bonum martyrum; et poenam damnatorum ordinat in gloriam suae iustitiae."—*Sum. Theol.* II. i. qu. lxxix. art. 4.

Nor does Aquinas even shrink from the coarser and more revolting forms of the belief in the serviceableness to the elect of the torment of the damned. "Dicendum, quod impiorum poenae in perpetuum duraturae non erunt omnino ad nihilum utiles: sunt enim utiles ad duo. Primo ad hoc quod in eis divina justitia conservatur, quae est Deo accepta propter seipsam; unde Gregorius 4 Dial. (cap. 44): *Omnipotens Deus, quia pius est, miserorum cruciatu non pascitur: quia autem justus est, ab iniquorum ultione in perpetuum non sedatur.* Secundo ad hoc sunt utiles ut de his electi gaudeant, dum in his Dei justitiam contemplantur, et cum hoc se evasisse cognoscunt."—*In Sententias*, IV. *Dist.* XLVI. qu. i. art. 3, ad quart.

The terrible passage in *Purgatorio*, xx. 94-96, betrays, in a momentary flash of passion, a similar conception.

That there is remorse in hell is repeatedly asserted by Aquinas, *e.g.*: "Ad tertium dicendum quod etiam in damnatis manet naturalis inclinatio ad virtutem: alioquin non esset in eis remorsus conscientiae. Sed quod non reducatur in actum, contingit quia deest gratia, secundum divinam iustitiam. Sicut etiam in caeco remanet aptitudo ad videndum in ipsa radice naturae, inquantum est animal naturaliter habens visum: sed non reducitur in actum, quia deest causa quae reducere possit formando organum quod requiritur ad videndum."—*Sum. Theol.* II. i. qu. lxxxv. art. 2.[1]

[1] Cf. Postscript p. 271.

CHAPTER VIII

PURGATORY

In many respects Dante's treatment of purgatory departs further from the current ecclesiastical tradition, and displays a greater independence than any other portion of the "Comedy." In the first, place, his representation of the site of purgatory is startlingly divergent from what is usual. I believe that the Catholic Church has never laid down anything definitely on this point, nor indeed much about purgatory at all; but the teaching of Aquinas and the view which was generally accepted before he wrote is that purgatory is a sort of cavern in the bowels of the earth, in the purlieus of hell. Dante, on the contrary, represents it as a sunlit hill rising out of mid-ocean at the exact antipodes of Jerusalem; and all readers of the "Comedy" are impressed with the beauty of the descriptions and perhaps still more of the atmospheric suggestions of the *Purgatorio*. Now why should Dante thus depart from the ecclesiastical tradition? The suggestion that it is merely a poetic artifice to avoid the repetition of the scenery of hell is inadequate, to say the least; and we shall find a far profounder and more significant answer to the question if we look for it in connection with another special

feature of Dante's handling of the doctrine of purgatory. The last six cantos of the *Purgatorio*, that is to say nearly a fifth of the whole poem, have really nothing to do with purgatory itself, but are concerned with the Earthly Paradise or Garden of Eden; and it is in the connection between purgatory and the Earthly Paradise that we shall find our clue. To begin with, the Earthly Paradise is literally the Garden of Eden itself, not a mere figure or type of it. Dante regards the mountain of purgatory, then, as the pedestal of the Garden of Eden, in which Adam and Eve lived their brief life of innocence,—according to Dante and Aquinas, about six hours. So when the souls in Dante's purgatory are climbing the mountain they are literally regaining the very paradise that our first parents lost, and the second *cantica* of the "Comedy" has a better right to the title "Paradise Regained" than Milton's poem has; for it shows how the redeemed souls reascend to the "lofty garden" and there taste for a few hours the actual joys of Eden. Thus, one by one, they make good, as it were, the great lapse of the Fall, and actually realise the earthly bliss that would have been theirs by birthright had it not been forfeited by the first sin. And so they pass to the Celestial Paradise and enjoy the fruition of the Divine Aspect only when they have first enjoyed the fullness of earthly bliss as the original purpose of the Creator planned. Whether or not there were any germs of such a belief as this

in popular legends and traditions I think it is certain that no writer of authority had ever given it any countenance; and to appreciate its full significance we must consider two points. First we must realise as clearly as possible the teaching of the Church about the life of innocence, and then we must recall all that has been already said about the significance attached by Dante to the earthly life, regarded as having its own independent significance and value, and as being worthy to be lived and experienced for its own beauty. What then was the ecclesiastical teaching concerning the life of Eden? Here Aquinas is particularly beautiful and moving. I have said that it is in his hypothetical psychologies that he finds scope for the imaginative splendour of his mind. It is his angel-lore that is most elaborate, and it was that that gave him his title of the Angelic Doctor. But nowhere is he more beautiful, and nowhere do his speculations come closer and more directly home to us than in his psychology of unfallen man. For he so describes the life of Eden as to wake in us exiled sons of Eve a home sense that we belong to Eden still, that its life is yet within us, as well as heaven being above us, and that even now and here it is abnormal for us to live any lower life than that of the Earthly Paradise. Before the Fall, he tells us, man had all the physical appetites that he has now, and, moreover, the delight of the senses was much keener yet than it now is. But the desires

and appetites were all of them in perfect harmony, because they were all completely subject to reason. But reason does not mean cold ratiocination. It means the harmonising and totalising balance that combines the animal, intellectual and spiritual powers into a full and symmetrical humanity. When subject to reason, therefore, no passion or desire could ever urge its own special claim without reference to the whole balance of perfect manhood. It could never be a warping or disturbing pressure, but must always be a note in a harmony.

But if this was the state of man, it may well be asked how he came to fall. Aquinas has some difficulty in answering the question; but we must remember that if man is a whole, composed of certain parts, he is also a part of a certain whole.[1] That whole is the universe, in which God has given him his special place; and if all the different appetites and faculties of unfallen man spontaneously related themselves to his total good, under the guidance of reason, man himself should in like manner have related himself to the whole scheme of things under the supreme will of God. Herein he failed. Just as a man may be hungry and may know that eating would in itself be pleasant, and suitable for his bodily health, but may also know that under the existing circumstances (the supply being limited, let us say, and many more urgent needs having to be met by it)

[1] Cf. *De Monarchia*, i. 7: 1-3.

he would be violating in himself as a man the fitness that he would be establishing in himself as an animal, did he actually eat; and as such a man might therefore not even want to eat, and might be wholly unconscious of any importunate demand for gratification on the part of his appetite; even so Adam, when conscious of the desire to know good and evil, which was a legitimate desire in itself, for it would in truth enhance his whole humanity, ought also to have felt that until God gave it him he would be violating a greater harmony if he allowed this desire to become importunate for instant gratification. His sin, then, was seeking what it was good for him, in his totality of manhood, to have, but what it was not good for the scheme of the whole creation for him to have now and thus, since God had ordained otherwise. If he considered himself as a complete whole it was good, but if he considered himself as a part of a more august and greater whole than himself it was bad.

His penalty was that since he had pursued his own blessedness without finding its place in the Divine scheme and referring it to the Divine will, all his own passions and desires at once imitated him and began to pursue and clamour for their own gratification without reference to the whole balance of the man. His own conception of his total good had not been wrong or unwholesome in itself; and no more were the demands of his sectional impulses now; but he had forgotten that he was a part whose

true glory lay in its relations with the whole, and so did they. Thus, instead of being an harmonious group of mutually supplementing and balancing powers and desires, and mutually fulfilling and furthering purposes, he found himself set in doubtful control over a storm of rebellious desires and impulses, each acting on its own account without reference to the rest, and clamouring for instant gratification in defiance of the directing power of reason. And so the bark of reason must battle with the tossing sea and fierce storm winds ever threatening to engulf her, instead of being carried forward by their concordant impulse and support to the haven of blessedness.

The reader will remember those memorable words[1] in which Virgil, when he has led Dante to the Earthly Paradise, having brought him through all the circles of purgatory, tells him that he shall now give him no further direction of any kind. He must take his own impulses for his guide. They cannot lead him wrong. The only possible sin that he could commit would be to baulk their promptings. Thus paradise is regained, and more than regained; for the souls are now not where Adam and Eve were before the Fall, but where they would have been had they borne the test and had man's harmony with the total scheme of God become as spontaneous as his own inner harmony, and both irrevocable.

[1] *Purgatorio*, xxvii. 127-142.

This ideal earthly life was in due course to have been superseded by the heavenly life, in which man would pass from the perfect balance and fulfilment of his human nature, as created by God, to the perfect fruition of faculties raised above themselves and above their nature by illuminating grace. Then he would see God in his essence.

This being so, the ordinary conception of the course of human history was that when man fell, the state of earthly blessedness, being once lost, became absolutely and eternally unattainable; but through the grace of God and in virtue of the atoning death of Christ, by faith and the sacraments, man, though he could not regain the experience of full earthly blessedness, might pass from the storms and trials of this life into that higher life, to which Eden was to have been the prelude. According to this, the Fall permanently cut out of the programme of man what had been an essential part of the first conception of the Deity.

Dante apparently could not accept this divine failure, and believed that if not here, then hereafter, not only must the Heavenly Paradise be gained, but the Earthly Paradise also must become an actual experience (and not a mere tradition) for each one of the redeemed; that so the divine plan for humanity should be realised in its integrity, and man should know the earth not only as a place of exile, but as a home, not only as the scene of temptation and trial, but as the garden of delight,

in which he should experience the frank and full fruition of his nature, as God first made it.

How far this beautiful conception was a positive objective belief with Dante it would be rash to say; but as a symbol it interprets and crowns all that we have insisted on previously in reference to the steady trend of his mind in the direction of linking up the secular and temporal order with the spiritual and eternal, and raising it into worthy partnership with it. For in spite of what we may call Dante's official pessimism, he was not really content to abandon this life to the powers of darkness. If men did live in a tangled forest they might live, even on this side the grave, on the sunlit hill of a well-ordered state on earth, of which Eden is the symbol; and it was the specific function of Roman Law to restrain or banish the brutal passions that bar the way to such an earthly state; and who could say when the political Messiah might arise to drive the wolf of greed back to hell and make earth like Eden? At any rate, we are not to accept it as the final and conclusive will of God that this life on earth should always require us to watch and suspect our impulses and feel that they are perpetually lying in wait for us to our hurt, sin crouching for ever at our door. Here or hereafter, in outward fact or in inward sympathy, we must live the life, truly and fully, of spontaneous and unsuspecting fruition of earth, even as we hope at last to live the life of heaven.

This ideal naturally affects Dante's whole conception of the nature of the process of purgation itself. This process consists in recovering the lost balance of nature, in erasing the traces of its disturbance, and so in regaining the Earthly Paradise. The mountain pedestal of Eden must be climbed, and its sides are the natural, nay, the inevitable, site of that purgation whose goal is the regaining of its summit.

This is why Virgil is Dante's guide not only in hell, but in purgatory. But we may note that although he is the appointed guide, yet he does not know the way. He has to conjecture and enquire. All this is in perfect consistency with Dante's scheme. Does he not tell us at the end of the *De Monarchia* that the Earthly Paradise typifies the life of blessedness upon earth, and that it is the specific function of human reason to guide us to this blessedness? Had man not fallen there would have been no need of temporal or spiritual regimens to discipline either body or soul. Each man would have been his own king and bishop. Reason, or philosophy, and revelation, would have been his guides, and even if they had had human organs there would have been no need of a formal and institutional state or church.

But fallen man needs discipline, and it is the function of the Roman Empire and the Roman Law to secure such conditions on earth as will make our earthly life as near as may be the reflection of the

life of Eden. If the empire is recreant to its task, then philosophy, or reason, in obedient submission to revelation, must lead men individually and inwardly to the state which they cannot reach collectively and outwardly for lack of true guidance.[1] So Virgil, as representing human reason, is Dante's guide to Eden; but he is a guide who knows the nature of the country sought, but does not know the way. Because the only way that fallen men can tread is the way of penitence, opened by the death of Christ, and paved by the sacraments of the Church, which are uncomprehended or unknown to human philosophy. And yet at the divine instigation this path is trodden by steps of ethical regeneration which lead back to the state of Eden, where reason comes to its own and is in its true domain—although an exile from it. Virgil is the guide in purgatory because the deepest note in the *Purgatorio* is ethical, just as the deepest note in the *Paradiso* is mystical.

It would now be natural to go straight on to the consideration of the actual nature and meaning of penitence, as conceived by Dante; but we will turn aside for a moment to examine an interesting point in which the poet departs, so far as I know, from all authorities, and yet keeps well within the principles of the scholastic philosophy. It illustrates

[1] This I take it is the meaning of the first canto of the *Inferno*. Compare also the close of the *De Monarchia* and such passages as *Purg.* xvi. 97-114.

the freedom and creative power with which he could handle them.

Aquinas repeatedly discusses the question, without ever finding a quite satisfactory answer to it, how it is that disembodied spirits in purgatory, or devils, who are spiritual beings that never had any bodies at all, can suffer pain from material fire. He is so pitilessly logical that he is compelled to reject, one after another, all the suggested solutions; but he has the extremest difficulty in finding one of his own. In fact, he hardly does find one. But he does the best he can, and at any rate he has no doubt as to the fact.

Now when Dante gives the disembodied souls provisional aërial bodies he is setting forth an unauthorised doctrine of his own which Aquinas does not share, and yet by studying Aquinas we can make out exactly what it is. It is a well known belief of the Middle Ages, that a man might be injured, and might have diseases given him, by witchcraft. You might, for instance, make a waxen image of the man and reduce him by operating upon it to wasting sickness and death. Philosophically considered, such a waxen image was not the man's body, for it was not the entelechy of that lump of wax to enter into any such relation with that particular man, or with any man at all. Whereas it is the entelechy of a human body to support a human soul and minister sensations to it. Moreover, the wax remains wax, and nothing but wax, whereas the

material that makes up our body is changed in its entire disposition, and is made naturally to share in a higher vitality than was its own before. It is possible then within the circle of scholastic beliefs to conceive of matter which does not in any true sense form part of a man's body, and is yet so connected with him that acts done upon it will beget sensations in him, and so have effects upon his consciousness exactly similar to those which would be produced by things done to his own body. Now S. Thomas expressly recognises all this, and distinguishes between the binding or connecting (*allegatio*) of a spirit to a body as its form, and the binding of a spirit to a body of which it is not the form, as practised by necromancers with the aid of demons; and he even makes use of this idea in one of his attempts to establish a connection between an immaterial spirit and material fire.[1] But the obvious further step forward that Dante makes was apparently too bold for him.

Yet again S. Thomas repeatedly tells us that though spiritual beings can in a certain sense manifest themselves in visible form, they have not really bodies at all. In fact it is hardly correct to say that they manifest themselves in the bodily appearances in question; for they are not locally present in the shape they present to men's eyes, except in the sense in which they are present wherever they are producing any effect at all. So that

[1] The passage is given on p. 239.

it is more strictly correct to say that the angel is producing an appearance than that he is taking a form. Thus, too, when Moses and Elijah "appeared" on the mount of transfiguration, Elijah really was there because he had long ago been caught up, body and soul, to some lofty place by God, and he could therefore actually come in his whole personality to the mount. But Moses had died, and the resurrection was not yet; and therefore Moses could not really appear in person. It was only a phantasm of him that was visible, though his soul was indeed present in consciousness, as an angel may be said to be present in efficiency at the place where he is producing an appearance.

By combining all these elements Dante represents the souls as reflecting themselves, in rainbow fashion, upon a certain portion of the air, which then travels and moves and smiles and weeps, as an angel might express its good will or deliver its message through such a form; only that in this case the aerial forms have also the same kind of connection with the souls that the waxen images have with the victims of magic. They are not real bodies, because the air is not organised or changed, and the momentary function it is performing is not its entelechy; but they perform the functions of bodies both as expressing emotions, and as producing sensations in the souls by what happens to them. Thus Dante solves his problem better than Aquinas does, but by means of resources that lie

well within the range of the doctrines and beliefs common to them both.

The contrast is far deeper, however, when we pass from what, after all, is only a detail in the machinery of the poem, to the conception of penitence, and the function of purgatory in connection with it, that lies at its very heart. The key to the difference between Aquinas and Dante is to be found in the fact that Aquinas, as indeed we should naturally expect, is never thinking of the Earthly Paradise at all, or of the full and firmly established recovery of the ethical balance and the pure earthly joy of Eden, when he is discoursing of purgatory. Why should he be? It is no part of either his official or his personal creed. What he is thinking of is the sacrament of penitence, ordained to save man from the penalty of eternal death pronounced by the divine justice upon sin; and of the conditions that would often interfere with its efficacy, or otherwise warp its action, if no provision were made to supplement it on the other side of the grave. S. Thomas's treatment of purgatory must be taken as a part of his teaching as to the sacrament of penitence, and Dante's as a part of his conception of the divine ideal of human life on earth as the forecourt of heaven.

As I understand S. Thomas's teaching on the sacrament of penitence and on purgatory, it is this: Contrition, if deep and genuine enough, *together with*

the intention of confessing, receiving absolution, and performing the "satisfaction" enjoined, is enough to free a man from eternal death. But if he improperly delays to execute his intention this may (it depends upon the circumstances) be mortal sin. And in that case he will die eternally. If, on the other hand, he confesses and receives absolution but without real contrition, the efficacy of the absolution will not be annulled, but its action will be suspended. If he comes to feel real contrition hereafter the absolution he has already received will become effective, and he need not confess the same sins again, but he must confess the sin of having feigned contrition. When absolution has been received or has become effective, the *culpa*, or sin proper, is gone; and though as long as life lasts he must hate his sins and be sorry that he has committed them, yet the pollution, foulness, and sense of shame are all cancelled, and no stain cleaves to his soul. The *reatus*, however, remains until the satisfaction enjoined has been performed. This may include restitution or reparation, if such are possible, but that is not the meaning of the word. It is doing what is laid down by the priest in confessional as the satisfaction imposed by divine justice in penalty for the sin. It may consist of penance only. What exactly the *reatus* is may be best illustrated from criminal and civil law. It is the condition of a man under a sentence not yet worked out, or of an undischarged bankrupt

still liable for his debts. When the satisfaction has been done the *reatus* also is annulled. What remains, then, for purgation after death? Nothing, in this case, on the count of mortal sin. But if the intention of the true penitent to confess has not been carried out, because there was no opportunity for it, or if the satisfaction imposed has not been done because the man died before he had time to do it, then the soul will have for a longer or shorter period to endure extreme suffering, greater than any one has ever borne on earth, greater even than that of Christ upon the cross, to work off the *reatus*.

The prominence I have given in this summary to contrition as the only absolutely and unconditionally necessary condition of escape from eternal death, might well give a false impression of the views of S. Thomas as to the essential importance of actual confession and absolution. So great is the stress he lays on this that he repeatedly speaks of it as necessary without qualification. Baptism and confession are alike necessary for salvation, the only difference being that since baptism is needed to annul original sin, it is unconditionally necessary for all men, whereas confession and absolution are only necessary for those who have committed mortal sin, that is to say, for all except the saints. I doubt whether the reader of the uncompleted treatment of the sacrament of penitence in the *Summa Theologica* which extends to thirty folio pages, would gather with certainty that

there could be any possibility at all of escaping the eternal penalty of mortal sin, without actual confession and absolution by a duly ordained priest; and certainly in making the formal statement that this is so, Aquinas does not think it necessary to add any qualification. But we are not to suppose that when he wrote his last great treatise he really believed that a repentant sinner, who had died genuinely contrite and with the purpose and desire of formal confession if it were possible (for this at least is quite uniformly insisted on), would none the less perish everlastingly. The fact seems to be that Thomas regarded formal confession not as having been dispensed with by the divine mercy, so much as having been credited to the sinner as implied in his intention, if the circumstances allowed no more. Hence S. Thomas can habitually speak of confession as necessary, and only incidentally refer to the possibility of the confession being "taken as made." It will be noticed that Dante's repentant sinners, who turn to God or cry upon Mary at the moment of death, are wholly possessed by what Aquinas speaks of as the *virtue* of penitence, which essentially co-operates with the *sacrament* of penitence, but is to be distinguished from it. Aquinas declares that the virtue, without the sacrament, has no formal efficacy to salvation. It is difficult to believe that Dante had the same sense of the distinction.

But we have so far only spoken of mortal sins,

and it is generally in reference to venial sins that Aquinas speaks of purgatory. Venial sins are all such as do not involve the deliberate turning away of the affections from the supreme love of God. A man may be free from even venial sins for a short time, but not for long. Even the saints commit them. They rise from the working of our natural impulses, uncontrolled by reason; and though we can resist any one of them successfully, we cannot long resist them all. It is as though our minds were insufficiently garrisoned against the enemy, so that we can defend any but not every point against him. For instance, if we have plunged into severe study to distract our minds from carnal thoughts, we may be surprised by a certain self-complacency at the thought of our superiority! Inordinate heat in defending the truth, slight motions of dislike and resentment in defending ourselves from attack, doubt of another's goodness on inadequate evidence, and even pulling a boy's hair "a little" (though Aquinas seems to think this last ought hardly to count as anything), and humorous interruptions of serious conversation that do not really tend to refreshment, are instances. The "idle word," of which, according to that severe text (Matthew xii. 36), we shall all have to give an account, is indeed the favourite instance of venial sin. Notice that all these foibles if carried somewhat further and deliberately and persistently indulged are mortal, no longer venial, sins. Thus,

to take a more serious case, a man may drink too much, and know that he is unduly indulging his appetite, without mortal sin, if he does not realise the strength of the liquor and does not intend to get drunk. To get drunk deliberately is mortal sin.

Now it is true that there are many ways of wiping off the film of venial sin, and restoring the full brightness or lustre of the soul (its *nitor*) which it somewhat tarnishes. Fervour of love does it. Perhaps even entering a consecrated church. Sprinkling with holy water, or beating the breast,[1] or other salutary acts may clear the soul from venial sin. But such sins are always accumulating; and if a man dies suddenly, or in his sleep, he may have no opportunity of repenting of them. They have their own *culpa* as well as their *reatus*, and though purgatory only acts on the *reatus* of mortal sins it acts on the *culpa* of venial sins as well.

Purgatory then, in the scheme of Aquinas, exists chiefly to supplement the *sacrament*, and has really little to do with the *virtue*, of penitence. It is there to exact the due penalty of sin which has not been paid on earth. Or to restore the lustre of the soul that has been tarnished but not rusted or corroded on earth. In certain cases, as we have seen, venial sins may be repented in purgatory, if by some accident their *culpa* has not been removed on earth; but broadly speaking, the penitence must

[1] Cf. *Paradiso*, xxii. 108.

have been accomplished upon earth, and the punishment only remains for purgatory.

Now Dante is as completely psychological and experiential as Aquinas is sacramental. He is deeply conscious that when we sin we commit ourselves to the wrong side. We testify to a false conception of the values of life. We work the thing which is evil and false into the tissues of our being, and stamp our record upon it. And the soul cries out for some opportunity of bearing more eloquent and more passionate testimony to the truth than it has borne to the falsehood. It must identify itself more entirely with the good than it has done with the evil. The act of repentance and the state of penitence, with Dante, consist in a realised change in the scale or scheme of values, together with a keen sense of having made our life the record and the testimony to the meaner thing instead of the nobler. All this may doubtless be included, for the time, in every true act of contrition. But how many of us secure this true scale of values in stable and permanent equilibrium in this life, and live it into all our thoughts and acts till our whole life is one glowing testimony to it, obliterating all our record of disordered affections? Saints and martyrs perhaps. But we others? Purgatory with Dante is an opportunity given us of unliving the life that we have lived, and building up for ourselves a past through which "the stream of memory can flow unstained." [1] It gives us the opportunity of

[1] *Purgatorio*, xiii. 88-90.

living ourselves out of the thing with which we have united ourselves and living ourselves into the thing we have severed ourselves from. So far from being a mere supplement to the sacrament of penitence it is the inner experience and vitally organic process, beyond the grave, to which that sacrament does but admit us. The only act of "satisfaction" done on earth that we hear of as availing a soul in purgatory is not anything enjoined as penance but an intense mortification, endured for love, of the sinner's own besetting sin of pride. It was an inner reversal, not an outward cancelling, of his sin; and it stood in no connection with the sacrament of penitence.[1]

Dante accepts the belief of his church that the sufferings of purgatory are material. There is, so far as I can see, nothing in his own conception of the matter which would necessitate, perhaps nothing that would suggest, this form of expression of penitence. It is expression that Dante needs, some means of self-utterance that should relieve the tension of the soul that says to itself: "That is what I love, and this is what I have been." But Dante has no difficulty in finding in the traditional physical suffering the vital expression which he demands; only it must not be simply suffering as such. That is enough in itself for the penal efficacy of Thomas's purgatory, but not for the building up of a new life demanded by Dante.

[1] *Purgatorio*, xi. 133 *sqq*.

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For him it cannot be merely penal, something to be borne. It must be active, something to be and to do. It must be some form of suffering which, in each specific case, gives the soul the means of testifying directly to its abhorrence of the sin committed, and its love of the virtue slighted, upon earth. It must be living as well as suffering. So the pains of purgatory, like those of hell, which are only penal in Aquinas, are significant in Dante. Thus the souls of the gluttons, as they pass round the mountain, come at intervals to luscious fruit which they may not gather. They feel, as they pass the fruit-trees, the anguish of the tug of hunger upon them, but they rejoice in it, because it gives them the opportunity of that self-utterance which they demand, and the sense that they are now dominating that which once dominated them. It is more than a mere profession. It is the proclamation, the triumphant vindication, in agony but also in joy, of their reversed scale of values and their self-identification with the better part. Thus it is essential to Dante's conception of purgatory that the pain itself shall be a relief, and therefore shall be not endured, but eagerly embraced, by the souls. That this is so they themselves repeatedly declare. They fling themselves upon their sufferings with the same eagerness now with which before they had flung themselves upon their evil gratifications. Their torment is itself their solace. The lustful carefully guard themselves, as they press

near Dante, from allowing any portion of their frames to project for a moment beyond the fierce flames which their shame "assists," and, most beautiful and enlightening of all, one of the souls tells Dante that that same impulse which brought Christ gladly to the agony of the cross throws them upon their sufferings.[1]

Now Aquinas, as naturally follows from what we have seen, distinctly excludes any such experience. He says indeed that the souls voluntarily accept their torment, but they accept it simply as an imposed condition of the future bliss for which they long. It is repellent to them in itself. The patient that abhors the surgeon's cauterising iron feels that it is intrinsically necessary to his restored health; and the martyr does not wish that his suffering were not there, nor wish that it were less, but, if his love is great, bears it easily, eagerly, and with delight. But the pain of purgatory, Aquinas expressly declares, is not such. Nay, he even lays it down as one of the arguments for the existence of purgatory that were there no such place the repentant sinner who died before he had done satisfaction on earth would have the advantage over the sinner who had lived to do it, for he would escape that suffering endured against his will in penalty for the evil pleasure secured with his will, which the Divine justice exacts.[2]

[1] *Purgatorio*, xxiii. 70-75; compare xxi. 61-69.

[2] For select passages in illustration of the views of S. Thomas on purgatory see pp. 239 *sqq*.

Far-reaching indeed is the difference between the means provided by the doctrine of Aquinas for making good the omissions of earth as to the sacrament of penitence, and Dante's conception of extended opportunities and deepened experiences, which shall enable the soul, by divinely supported but still internal and organic processes, to recover the Earthly Paradise, as a prelude to the joy of heaven.

It would be travelling outside the subject of this book to dwell on what is perhaps the most moving portion of the whole of the *Purgatorio*, the scene in which Dante meets Beatrice and endures the agony of one who must face his own betrayed and outraged ideal.

But it is hardly outside it to say a few words about one of the most perfect and beautiful allegories in this poem, or in any other, the allegory of the streams of Lethe and Eunoë, in the Earthly Paradise. The streams of Forgetfulness and of Fair Memory, which the souls drink before they enter into the Heavenly Paradise, flow not on the purgatorial sides of the mountain, but in the Garden of Eden. That is to say, surely, that whereas the strenuousness of repentance on the mount of purgatory may constitute definite and active self-identification with good, and renunciation of evil, yet in its process it concentrates the mind on good as that which has not, and on evil as that which has, been done. And for the soul to enter

into the consummate bliss of heaven the severance between self and sin must be so absolute as to make the evil thoughts, deeds, and passions of the past things that not only are not, but that we cannot recognise in any inward throb or echo as still part of even our past selves. And the good that we purposed and never accomplished, or that we once knew and have since lost hold of; all that we have ever been or might have been of good; must be a thing that is. Now when the souls drink the streams of Lethe their guilty past so drops away from them that it is as much a matter of mere external knowledge as the sins or guilty deeds of some other, whether personally known to us or unknown. The souls know, but no longer feel them. "Here we repent not," they can say.[1] And when they drink the stream of Eunoë all the past good that ever was theirs, however deeply forgotten and overlaid, rises up again, not as past, but as living in the living present. Then the soul is its true self, and is ready to "rise to the stars." Now this is not accomplished on the purgatorial sides of the mountain. It is in the Earthly Paradise that the streams of Lethe and Eunoë flow. For it is not by strenuous repentance but by living the life of innocence, in the world of well-ordered and beauteous impulses and passions, that past sin and evil become unthinkable, and drop away, because there is nothing for them to assert their hold upon

[1] *Paradiso*, ix. 103.

by any kind of analogy or suggestion; while the good that has been forgotten revives and lives, because like recovers like. All the forgotten and stray impulses of Eden come back again to him who lives the life of Eden, as the scenes of long-forgotten childhood come back to one who sees again the contour of the mountains or recognises the breath of the flowers amidst which he was a child. It is in the Earthly Paradise that the streams of Lethe and Eunoë flow.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VIII

Note to p. 224

"Patiuntur igitur ab igne corporeo substantiae incorporeae per modum alligationis cujusdam. Possunt enim alligari spiritus corporibus vel per modum formae, sicut anima corpori humano alligatur ut det ei vitam, vel etiam absque hoc quod sit ejus forma, sicut necromantici daemonum virtute spiritus alligant imaginibus aut hujusmodi rebus." —*Contra Gentiles*, IV. 90.

Notes to pp. 226-235

1. On the nature of the virtue and the sacrament of penitence, their relations, and in what sense both are necessary.

In the *Summa Theologica* S. Thomas declares, without qualification, that mortal sin can only be removed by the sacrament of penitence, in which the virtue of Christ's passion operates through the absolution of the priest, upon the contrition of the penitent as its material. "Respondeo dicendum quod aliquid est necessarium ad salutem dupliciter: uno modo, absolute; alio modo, ex suppositione. Absolute quidem necessarium est illud sine quo nullus salutem consequi potest: sicut gratia Christi, et sacramentum baptismi, per quod aliquis in Christo renascitur. Ex suppositione autem est necessarium sacramentum poenitentiae: quod

quidem necessarium non est omnibus, sed peccato subiacentibus; dicitur enim in II. *Paralip.* ult.: *Et tu, Domine iustorum, non posuisti poenitentiam iustis, Abraham, Isaac et Iacob, his qui tibi non peccaverunt.*

"*Peccatum autem, cum consummatum fuerit, generat mortem*, ut dicitur Iac. I. Et ideo necessarium est ad salutem peccatoris quod peccatum removeatur ab eo. Quod quidem fieri non potest sine poenitentiae sacramento, in quo operatur virtus passionis Christi per absolutionem sacerdotis simul cum opere poenitentis, qui cooperatur gratiae ad destructionem peccati: sicut enim dicit Augustinus, *super Ioan, qui creavit te sine te, non iustificabit te sine te.* Unde patet quod sacramentum poenitentiae est necessarium ad salutem post peccatum: sicut meditatio corporalis postquam homo in morbum periculosum inciderit."—*Sum. Theol.* III. qu. lxxxiv. art. 5, corp.

"In hoc sacramento actus poenitentis se habet sicut materia; id autem quod est ex parte sacerdotis, qui operatur ut minister Christi, se habet ut formale et completivum sacramenti. Materia vero, etiam in aliis sacramentis, praeexistit a natura, ut aqua, vel ab aliqua arte, ut panis: sed quod talis materia ad sacramentum assumatur, indiget institutione hoc determinante. Sed forma sacramenti, et virtus ipsius, totaliter est ex institutione Christi, ex cuius passione procedit virtus sacramentorum."—*Sum. Theol.* III. qu. lxxxiv. art. 7, corp.

On the necessity of penitence Aquinas is no less emphatic than is Dante. "Unde potest contingere quod homo remittat offensam qua offensus est alicui, absque aliqua immutatione voluntatis

eius: non autem potest contingere quod Deus remittat offensam alicui absque immutatione voluntatis eius. Offensa autem peccati mortalis procedit ex hoc quod voluntas hominis est aversa a Deo per conversionem ad aliquod bonum commutabile. Unde requiritur ad remissionem divinae offensae quod voluntas hominis sic immutetur quod convertatur ad Deum, cum detestatione praedictae conversionis et proposito emendae. Quod pertinet ad rationem poenitentiae secundum quod est virtus. Et ideo impossible est quod peccatum alicui remittatur sine poenitentia secundum quod est virtus."—*Sum. Theol.* III. qu. lxxxvi. art. 2, corp. Compare *Inferno*, xxvii. 118-120, and *De Monarchia*, III. viii. 47-49.

But the sacrament becomes efficacious if penitence follows its administration, even if it has not preceded. "Confessio est actus virtutis, et pars sacramenti. Secundum autem quod est actus virtutis, est actus meritorius proprie; et sic confessio non valet sine caritate, quae est principium merendi. Sed secundum quod est pars sacramenti, sic ordinat confitentem ad sacerdotem, qui habet claves Ecclesiae; qui per confessionem conscientiam confitentis cognoscit; et secundum hoc confessio etiam potest esse in eo qui non est contritus, quia potest peccata sua sacerdoti innotescere, et clavibus Ecclesiae se subjicere. Et quamvis tunc non percipiat absolutionis fructum, tamen recedente fictione percipere incipiet, sicut etiam est in aliis sacramentis; unde non tenetur iterare confessionem qui fictus accedit, sed tenetur postmodum fictionem suam confiteri."—*In Sent.* IV. *Dist.* XVII. qu. iii. art. 4, sol. 1.

But notwithstanding, contrition, if sufficiently intense, together with the purpose to confess, if it is not the penitent's fault that he has not carried out that purpose, suffices. "Contritio cum proposito confitendi et desiderio absolutionis sufficit ad liberandum a morte aeterna."—*In Sent.* IV. *Dist.* XVII. qu. iii. art. 3, sol. 1, ad secundum.

After contrition and absolution, the *culpa* of the sin is gone, together with the foulness of the absolved soul, and there is no place for shame left, though there is still cause for life-long sorrow, and the *reatus* persists till cancelled by "satisfaction." "Erubescentia respicit peccatum solum inquantum habet turpitudinem; et ideo postquam peccatum quantum ad culpam remissum est, non manet pudori locus; manet autem dolori, qui non solum de culpa est, inquantum habet turpitudinem, sed etiam inquantum habet nocumentum annexum."—*In Sent.* IV. *Dist.* XVII. qu. ii. art. 4, sol. 1, ad primum.

2. The function of purgatory in relation to mortal sin, as a supplement to the sacrament. "Poena puragtorii est in supplementum satisfactionis quae non fuerat plene in corpore consummata."—*In Sent.* IV. *Dist.* XLV. qu. ii. art. 2, sol. 2, corp.

"Si enim . . . justitia Dei hoc exigit ut peccatum per poenam debitam ordinetur; oportet quod ille qui post contritionem de peccato et absolutionem decedit ante satisfactionem debitam, post hanc vitam puniatur; et ideo illi qui purgatorium negant, contra divinam justitiam loquuntur; et propter hoc erroneum est, et a fide alienum."—*In Sent.* IV. *Dist.* XXI. qu. i. art. 1, sol. 1, corp. Compare the last passage cited on p. 248.

3. On the nature of venial sin and the impossibility of long escaping it: "Differentia autem peccati venialis et mortalis consequitur diversitatem inordinationis, quae complet rationem peccati. Duplex enim est inordinatio: una per subtractionem principii ordinis; alia qua, salvato principio ordinis, fit inordinatio circa ea quae sunt post principium. Sicut in corpore animalis quandoque quidem inordinatio complexionis procedit usque ad destructionem principii vitalis, et haec est mors: quandoque vero, salvo principio vitae, fit inordinatio quaedam in humoribus, et tunc est aegritudo. Principium autem totius ordinis in moralibus est finis ultimus, qui ita se habet in operativis, sicut principium indemonstrabile in speculativis, ut dicitur in VII *Ethic.* Unde quando anima deordinatur per peccatum usque ad aversionem ab ultimo fine, scilicet Deo, cui unimur per caritatem, tunc est peccatum mortale: quando vero fit deordinatio citra aversionem a Deo, tunc est peccatum veniale. Sicut enim in corporalibus deordinatio mortis, quae est per remotionem principii vitae, est irreparabilis secundum naturam; inordinatio autem aegritudinis reparari potest, propter id quod salvatur principium vitae; similiter est in his quae pertinent ad animam. Nam in speculativis qui errat circa principia, impersuasibilis est: qui autem errat salvatis principiis, per ipsa principia revocari potest. Et similiter in operativis qui peccando avertitur ab ultimo fine, quantum est ex natura peccati, habet lapsum irreparabilem: et ideo dicitur peccare mortaliter, aeternaliter puniendus. Qui vero peccat citra aversionem a Deo, ex ipsa ratione

peccati reparabiliter deordinatur, quia salvatur principium: et ideo dicitur peccare venialiter, quia scilicet non ita peccat ut mereatur interminabilem poenam."—*Sum. Theol.* II. i. qu. lxxii. art. 5, corp.

Thus mortal sin destroys the principle which bears the soul to its goal, but venial sin only puts impediments in the way. "Sicut etiam grave potest impediri ne perveniat deorsum vel propter corruptionem gravitatis in ipso, vel propter aliquod impedimentum occurrens, quo impeditur motus ejus ne ad finem naturalem perveniat."—*De Malo.* qu. vii. art. 11, corp.

"Actus appetitus sensitivi subjacet imperio rationis; quia ratio praeveniens ipsum, potest eum imperare vel etiam impedire: et ideo talis motus potest jam habere rationem culpae: et si sequatur judicium rationis, poterit etiam esse peccatum mortale, sicut et motus exteriorum membrorum imperati a ratione. Si autem praeveniat judicium rationis, est quidem peccatum si tendat in aliquid illicitum, quia in potestate hominis fuit ipsum cohibere: est tamen veniale peccatum et levissimum, ut patet per Augustinum, 12 de Trinit.; et hoc dicitur primus motus peccati. Motus autem superioris appetitus, idest voluntatis, consequens judicium rationis, jam potest esse peccatum mortale."—*Quodlibet*, IV. art. 21, corp.

On the question, "utrum contentio sit peccatum mortale," we learn that sometimes it is a mortal sin, but that it was not a sin at all in Job's case, for he wished to dispute with God: "Non tamen intendens neque veritatem impugnare, sed inquirere, neque circa hanc inquisitionem aliqua inordinatione vel animi vel vocis uti." *Contentio*

is a venial but not a mortal sin when "importat impugnationem falsitatis cum inordinato modo." —*Sum. Theol.* II. ii. qu. xxxviii. art. 1, ad quartum et corp. It is not a sin to defend yourself against an attack, "si vero cum animo vindictae vel odii, vel cum excessu debitae moderationis [aliquis] se defendat, semper est peccatum: sed veniale quidem quando aliquis levis motus odii vel vindictae se immiscet, vel cum non multum excedat moderatam defensionem."—*Sum. Theol.* II. ii. qu. xli. art. 1, corp. So also: "Primus quidem gradus [suspicionis] est ut homo ex levibus indiciis de bonitate alicuius dubitare incipiat. Et hoc est veniale et leve peccatum."—*Sum. Theol.* II. ii. qu. lx. art. 3, corp.

Movements of anger, though sinful, do not always involve mortal sin: "Puta cum aliquis appetit in aliquo modico se vindicare, quod quasi nihil est reputandum, ita quod etiam si actu inferatur, non esset peccatum mortale; puta si aliquis parum trahat aliquem puerum per capillos, vel aliquid huiusmodi."—*Sum. Theol.* II. ii. qu. clviii. art. 3, corp. And even drinking too much may be venial under certain circumstances: "Alio modo, sic quod aliquis percipiat potum esse immoderatum, non tamen aestimet potum esse inebriare potentem."—*Sum. Theol.* II. ii. qu. cl. art. 2, corp.

Teaching *inutilia* or being vain of your teaching may be venial: "Aliqui etiam male docentes quandoque non mortaliter, sed venialiter peccant, sicut quando aliqua inutilia docent, vel aliquis motus inanis gloriae eis insurgit."—*In Sent.* IV. *Dist.* XXI. qu. i. art. 2, sol. 1, ad quart. Compare

Dante's severer handling of this theme, *Paradiso*, xxix. 94 *sqq.*

It is impossible to avoid venial sins: "Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod quamvis homo in hac vita post baptismum naufragium evadere possit, quod est per peccatum mortale; non tamen potest evadere venialia, quibus ad naufragium disponitur, contra quae etiam poenitentia ordinatur; et ideo manet poenitentiae locus etiam in illis qui non mortaliter peccant, et per consequens confessionis."—*In Sent.* IV. *Dist.* XVII. qu. iii. art. 1, sol. 3.

In explaining: "*Si dixerimus quia peccatum non habemus, nos ipsos seducimus*," Aquinas says: "Etsi enim homo ad breve tempus sine actuali peccato esse possit, non tantum diu sic perseverare potest, ut saltem in veniale peccatum non cadat; ut sic hoc verbum *habemus* non determinatum, sed confusum praesens importet."—*In Sent.* III. *Dist.* III. qu. iii. Expositio primae partis textus. Again: "Ad secundum dicendum quod perpetua corruptio sensualitatis est intelligenda quantum ad fomitem, qui nunquam totaliter tollitur in hac vita: transit enim peccatum originale reatu, et remanet actu. Sed talis corruptio fomitis non impedit quin homo rationabili voluntate possit reprimere singulos motus inordinatos sensualitatis, si praesentiat: puta divertendo cogitationem ad alia. Sed dum homo ad aliud cogitationem divertit, potest etiam circa illud aliquis inordinatus motus insurgere: sicut cum aliquis transfert cogitationem suam a delectabilibus carnis, volens concupiscentiae motus vitare, ad speculationem scientiae, insurgit quandoque aliquis motus inanis

gloriae impraemeditatus. Et ideo non potest homo vitare omnes huiusmodi motus, propter corruptionem praedictam: sed hoc solum sufficit ad rationem peccati voluntarii, quod possit vitare singulos."—*Sum. Theol.* II. i. qu. lxxiv. art. 3.

4. The function of purgatory in relation to venial sins: Aquinas inclines to the opinion that any one who dies in possession of his reason and actuated by love must necessarily have cleared himself of the *culpa* of venial sins before his death, so that the *poena* alone will be left to be borne in purgatory. "Sed quandoque contingit quod aliqui in ipsis actibus peccatorum venialium vel in proposito venialiter peccandi occupantur somno vel aliqua passione auferente usum rationis, et praeveniuntur morte antequam possint habere usum rationis. Quibus manifestum est quod in hac vita peccata venialia non dimittuntur, et tamen propterea non impediuntur perpetuo a vita aeterna, ad quam nullo modo perveniunt, nisi omnino immunes ab omni culpa effecti. Et ideo oportet dicere, quod venialia remittuntur eis post hanc vitam etiam quantum ad culpam, eo modo quo remittuntur in hac vita; scilicet per actum caritatis in Deum, repugnantem venialibus in hac vita commissis."—*De Malo.* qu. vii. art. 11, corp.

5. The attitude of souls in purgatory to their sufferings: Purgatorial pains, though the souls are glad to accept them, are endured against the will, as an external condition of salvation. "Iustum est enim ut qui voluntati suae plus indulsit quam debuit, contra voluntatem suam aliquid patiatur, sic enim erit aequalitas."—*Sum. Theol.* III. qu. lxvi. art. 4, corp. Contrast *Purg.* xxi. 64-66.

Only in a very guarded sense can the punishments of purgatory be called voluntary. "Aliquid dicitur voluntarium dupliciter. Uno modo voluntate absoluta; et sic nulla poena est voluntaria, quia ex hoc est ratio poenae, quod voluntati contrariatur. Alio modo dicitur aliquid voluntarium voluntate conditionata, sicut ustio est voluntaria propter sanitatem consequendam; et sic aliqua poena potest esse voluntaria dupliciter. Uno modo, quia per poenam aliud bonum acquirimus; et sic ipsa voluntas assumit poenam aliquam, ut patet in satisfactione; vel etiam quia ille libenter eam accipit, et non vellet eam non esse, sicut accidit in martyrio.[1] Alio modo, quia quamvis per poenam nullum bonum nobis accrescat, tamen sine poena ad bonum pervenire non possumus, sicut patet de morte naturali; et tunc voluntas non assumit poenam, et vellet ab ea liberari; sed eam supportat; et quantum ad hoc voluntaria dicitur; et sic poena purgatorii est voluntaria."—*In Sent.* IV. *Dist.* XXI. qu. i. art. 1, sol. 4, corp.

So that if there were no purgatory those that happened to die before they had done satisfaction would have an unfair advantage. "Purgatio autem haec fit per poenas, sicut etiam in hac vita per poenas satisfactorias purgatio completa fuisset; alioquin, melioris conditionis essent negligentes quam solliciti, si poenam quam hic pro peccatis non implent non sustineant in futuro."—*Contra Gentiles*, IV. 91.

[1] A description of the martyr suffering "faciliter et prompte et delectabiliter" occurs in *Quodlibet*, IV. art. 19.

CHAPTER IX

HEAVEN

We have seen that Dante's representations both of hell and purgatory are distinguished from those of Aquinas by characteristics of far-reaching spiritual import. No such distinctions are to be found in heaven. On the conclusive bliss of the fruition of the Divine Aspect the aspiration of Aquinas and Dante alike is focused, and the radiance of that conception illuminates and pervades the whole work of both—except so far as there are dark places in their creed penetrable by no sun or star.

We have already seen that with reference to these dark places Aquinas is at a double disadvantage; for, in the first place, his treatment of hell lacks ethical illumination and emphasises dogmatic difficulties by attempting to explain them; and, in the second place, the form and purpose of almost the whole body of his work keeps his mysticism, that is to say, his immediate sense of the Divine (as distinct from his reflections and philosophising about it), latent, or in solution. It can be felt throughout, subtly guiding his hand and warming with an inward glow the calm surface of his intellectual exposition; but the extreme severity of

his method gives him little opportunity of direct appeal to the spiritual consciousness of his reader. And consequently it is much less easy to find in Thomas's heaven the mystic escape from that hell which he has intellectually projected right back into the centre of the divine love in whose presence we stand, than it is to feel that the darkness of Dante's unexplained, though ethically luminous hell, is quenched by the light of his heaven. And yet I can hardly think that any candid and spiritually sensitive reader of Aquinas can help being carried at last to the feeling that, in his ultimate sense of communion with supreme goodness, Aquinas himself had dropped from his consciousness the horror which his pitiless logic has fixed so tenaciously in ours, and was drinking at a pure fountain of love.

What I mean by dwelling so insistently on the way in which explanations may magnify difficulties, will be best illustrated by an example. There is one special feature in Dante's dogmatic conception of hell to which he was unable to give any ethical significance, which clamoured for some intelligible explanation or justification in his heart, and remained to him to the last an unfathomable mystery. It was the exclusion of the virtuous heathen from heavenly bliss. He reflected no doubt that to challenge the fact would be to challenge the whole conception of faith as the sole means of salvation, and to deny the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*—

outside the Church is no salvation. He accepted it, but he could not reconcile himself to it. In the *De Monarchia* he states the difficulty as calmly as Aquinas himself could do. But the throb of his grief beats through the *Purgatorio*, and his passionate protest breaks out in the *Paradiso*. In the heaven of Jupiter he appeals to the souls of the just kings for light on this mystery, which has made his soul go thirsty for many a year. Here, surely, if anywhere, in the heaven of Justice, this problem should be solved. The souls of the blessed do not solve it. They give the old answer, the answer of Isaiah and the answer of Paul: "Who art thou, O man, that judgest?" Our sight will not carry a span, and we strive to judge at a thousand miles away. The justice of God is too deep, not too shallow, for us to penetrate. We can see to the bottom of a shallow stream; we cannot see to the bottom of the abysmal ocean. But our very demand for justice is but a ray of light from God himself. It is some imperfect apprehension, some derived sense, of justice, outflowing from the inmost being of God that makes us demand justice in the universe. And for that demand to turn back upon its own source in protest is for the derivative ray to challenge the source from which it flows.[1] So much of what the blessed souls utter Dante can follow and understand. But they utter more that he cannot apprehend, in the ecstasy of their lofty

[1] Cf. pp. 105 *sqq*.

hymn of praise, as they contemplate in rapture the mysteries at which the poet's soul can only cry out in anguish. That is because they can see deeper than he sees. But even they see not to the bottom. Dante, then, does not explain. He says, indeed, all that can be said, or ever has been said, but it is not an explanation. It is an appeal to faith. Then he brings us into the felt and conscious presence of beings who see more and deeper than we, and to whose sight glory has come instead of darkness; and yet he tells us that even these souls, deep sunk as they are in Deity, cannot yet see all the light, and still live by something that we can only think of as faith. And yet to them the very limitation of their knowledge, as much as its reach and sweep, the "no further" as much as the "hitherto" of their admitted gaze, is a mode of felt contact with God, and therefore a source of rapture.

It is to be noted in this connection that if Dante cannot free himself from the shackles of his creed and see Plato and Aristotle and Virgil sharing with Augustine and Aquinas and David the fruition of the Divine Aspect, he has nevertheless so far freed himself that he finds room for the Trojan Ripheus and the Roman Trajan in the heaven of just kings—and the smith who has given his limbs thus much play within their chains is no other than Aquinas himself; who more than once refers to and tacitly endorses the belief that if one born in heathen parts or nurtured by wild beasts in a

forest should live perfectly according to the moral law, God would send a preacher to instruct him or would enlighten him by special revelation.

And again had Dante's heart rebelled (strange that it did not!) against the inclusion of "little infants" in the limbo of hopeless longing, tremulous with sighs, Aquinas again could have given him relief. For amongst the diverse opinions on the fate of unbaptised infants which he discusses, he regards as most probable that which believes them to be perfectly happy in all natural human joy, and to bear the penalty of the Fall only in that they never attain to the more than human blessedness of the Divine Aspect. But neither do they desire it—any more than a wise man desires to be a king or a bird. It is noteworthy that Bernard, too, into whose mouth Dante puts the assertion that baptism was necessary for the salvation of infants after the Christian era began, surrounds his actual utterances in his letter to Hugo of S. Victor with qualifications and reserves of which Dante takes no heed.

There is another point, as well as this of the intellectual explanation as against the mystic solution of difficulties, on which the *Paradiso* throws fresh light. It is the theme, to which we have again and again recurred, of Dante's persistent attempt to draw the secular life into fuller and worthier partnership with the spiritual. The connection in which we shall now touch, for the last

time, upon this subject, brings us to the consideration of a startlingly original, and even audacious, piece of unauthorised theology in which Dante assigns a specific share in the very act of redemption itself to the Roman Empire. I make no apology for dwelling upon it at some length.

The whole history of the doctrine of the Atonement is remarkable for the wide diversity of view through which it leads us. Apart altogether from the fundamental distinction between the consideration of the Incarnation as itself constituting an atonement by the unity of deity with humanity, and the forensic or legal conception that regarded it simply as needed to constitute a legal person capable of performing a necessary act, we find within the limits of this latter conception itself (beyond which we shall find little occasion to pass) a strange transformation of opinion between the earlier and the later teachers. The opinion current in the earlier Middle Ages, based on the teaching of the most authoritative of the Fathers, was that by the Fall man had given the devil a legal claim to him, to which some sort of validity must be allowed in the divine forum, so that if man were to be saved from the eternal death which he had earned simply by ignoring the devil's claim to him, the act would have been one of violence. In a word, it would have been robbing the devil of his due, which would offend the justice of the divine court. Gregory of Nyssa had given very frank expression to the con-

ception that the devil was over-reached and induced to forfeit the claim which could not have been ignored without violence had he stood to it. The offer was made to him that Christ, the Incarnate God, should be handed into his power if he would relinquish his claim upon man, by surrendering the " bond " or chirography (" handwriting ") supposed to be referred to in the Epistle to the Colossians as " blotted out " by Christ and " nailed to his cross " (Col. ii. 14). The devil fell into the snare, but having forfeited his bond on man, he found himself unable to assert the legal claim which he had acquired over Christ. For he had not reflected on the inherent incompatibility between God and hell. To hold God in hell is impossible, for the presence of God destroys hell. The devil had been deluded by the humanity of Christ which concealed his divinity; and Gregory does not shrink from saying that as the devil had concealed his hook of evil to which he persuaded man by the bait of good that he wrapped round it, and so deceived him, just so the devil was very justly deluded in his turn when the hook of Christ's deity was covered by the bait of his humanity, so that he gulped it down like a greedy fish, and was caught by it.[1]

Augustine uses similar language. Christ, " to redeem us, set his cross as a trap, and put his blood

[1] *Oratio Catechetica*, §§ 21 *sqq.*

in it like a bait."[1] But though the devil could shed that blood, he could not drink it. In shedding it, even, he had gone beyond his bond, and had therefore forfeited it. To this, it was currently supposed, that phrase in the Book of Job referred: "Canst thou draw out Leviathan with an hook?" And so it is interpreted by Gregory the Great in his Commentary on Job, the *Magna Moralia*.

It is against a slightly modified form of this doctrine that Anselm, in the eleventh century, wrote the *Cur deus homo*. He argues that this whole conception of the devil having any claim that can be urged in the divine forum at all is due to a pure confusion of thought. It is true that, as far as man is concerned, it would be perfectly just that he should perish everlastingly. Man on his part would have no plea to urge against the sentence. But the fact that man cannot complain of injustice if handed over to the devil, does not give the devil any just power to claim him. For man was not his own to give; and if a slave sells himself to another master it gives that other master no claim against his rightful owner, and cannot be pleaded in court. The Incarnation then cannot in any way be explained as necessary in order to over-reach the devil or otherwise invalidate his claim.

Now it is a usual, but quite mistaken, belief that Anselm substituted the conception familiar in later

[1] *Sermo* cxxx. *de verbis Evang. Johan.*

Protestant theology that the death of Christ was needful to appease the wrath of God and to satisfy his offended justice. But this is quite remote from the actual teaching of Anselm. He declares emphatically that man has no power to offend or in any way wrong or injure God, so that the conception of divine vengeance is wholly inadmissible. What cries out is not anything that has to be satisfied in God, but something that has to be restored in man. There is a dislocation of the order of the world implied in disobeying the divine injunctions, and in thought and intention, though it was impossible in act, violating the divine will. The nature of this dislocation or disturbance Anselm endeavours to bring home by asking his interlocutor whether he would do any act, however indifferent intrinsically, such as looking in a certain direction, to save the whole universe, or many universes were there such, from destruction, if he were in the actual presence of God, and God directly said to him, "I would by no means have you do it." And the answer being an unhesitating negative, he goes on to declare that we *are* in the actual presence of God, and that when we are tempted to sin God does say directly and personally to each one of us, "I would by no means have you do it." So if we sin, we do that against which the preservation of the whole universe from destruction could not weigh in the scale. How then can the balance be restored and the dis-

turbed order of the world re-established? Only by man rendering something which is not due, in excess corresponding to the defect when he withheld the obedience that was due. And this is impossible. For if we have done all, we can only say, "That which I have done was due." It is not possible even ideally that man should do more than preserve his moral world from further disturbance. He cannot restore it to true equilibrium. But if a man were God, and paid his life, which was not due, then surely he would be paying something of such immeasurable worth that it would outweigh and more than outweigh the destruction of innumerable universes. God then, and God alone, is able to render something of immeasurable worth which is not due. But it is man alone that has withheld the due and needs the power to render something more than due to balance it. So God became man, in order that there might be a being who as man had rendered less than due, and as God, was capable of rendering something not due, even in excess of the defect.

It will be seen then that Anselm, while still keeping within the forensic or legal conception, raises it to a purity and beauty that it has perhaps assumed in no other teacher. Now in Petrus Lombardus there is still a trace of the old pre-Anselmic doctrine. In Aquinas it has all but disappeared. He follows Anselm, but he discusses many points left untouched by him. He dwells

repeatedly on the intimacy of the love displayed in the act itself of the assumption of human nature by the Divine Word, and on the power of the example of Christ, especially in his obedience. And he also dwells on the fitness of God's justice being satisfied, and carefully distinguishes between the intention of the Jews and the intention of God in the crucifixion; and he insists (after a sermon preached by one Theodore at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D.) that as he who should burn a royal rescript would be guilty not of the destruction of so much ink and paper, but of rebellion against the king, even so though the deity of Christ cannot suffer, yet they who crucified Christ in his human nature were guilty of blasphemous outrage against God. (*Sum. Theol.* III., qu. xiv. arts. 11, 12.)

The reader of the seventh canto of the *Paradiso* will recognise at every turn the influences of Anselm and Aquinas reflected in the conceptions and the very phraseology of the exposition. God, says Dante, might have merely remitted the offence of man, consulting his mercy alone. But he so consulted justice as to raise mercy itself on its own ground to a higher level. For the claims of pity and tenderness were more fully met by enabling man to pay his due than they would have been by the remitting it. Justice was complied with and at the same time God thereby and therein showed himself more merciful than if he had only remitted the penalty. Thus

fully did he utter himself. "He proceeded on both his ways, and between the first morning and the last night never has or shall be so august a progress made on one path or the other."

But if Anselm and Aquinas are here, there is also something more. Dante holds that justice was done upon offending human nature by its legal execution in its entirety. But a wrong can only be legally avenged or expiated by a legally constituted authority. Human nature had sinned in its entirety, and in order that it might be executed or punished in its entirety two things were needful. It must exist in its entirety in some person that the law could reach, and there must be an authority constituted that had jurisdiction over the whole of humanity. The first of these conditions was fulfilled when Christ assumed human nature in its completeness, and the second had been prepared through the course of many ages by placing the Roman Empire and Roman Law in divinely sanctioned authority over the whole of mankind. Thus the death upon the cross under the Roman Pilate, the representative of the world power, not under Herod, the mere local ruler, constituted the execution of a judicial sentence upon offending humanity. The claims of justice were met by exaction of the legal penalty, and since the act of the Incarnate Word in thus rendering the due, and submitting himself to the Roman Law, was an act of ineffable condescension, the Anselmic formula

of a more than due rendered to compensate the due withheld, restoring the moral order of the world, was complied with, no less than the cruder legal formula of criminal law. And thus the temporal and spiritual orders were interlaced and blended together in the one supreme event of history.

Thus Dante calls the Roman Empire into partnership on its own plane with the eternal spiritual power, and places the crown on his conception of the parallelism and alliance between the temporal and spiritual orders. The act of the crucifixion, however, while it was the supreme act of justice when considered with reference to the human nature of Christ, was the supremest outrage when considered as wrought on his divine person. Different indeed (in the phrase of Aquinas) was the intention of the Jews as they clamoured for the death of Christ, and the intention of God! And, according to Dante, it was in the Roman power that the intention of God found the instrument, prepared in advance through the ages, for the supreme act of justice. Thus " one same act gave joy to the Jews and God. At it the earth shuddered and heaven was thrown open."

It is profoundly significant that the exposition of the central doctrine of the Christian faith, as conceived by Dante, should be placed by him upon the lips of the Roman Emperor and lawgiver, Justinian, and should be treated as giving us the

ultimate rationale of the temporal as well as the spiritual evolution of history.

Returning from this great dogmatic and historic episode, if it may be so described, we may conclude our study by touching upon what lies at the centre of the mysticism of Dante and Aquinas alike, and therefore at the heart of their thought of heaven, and the heavenly fruition. I mean the doctrine of eternity and of the eternal life. Aristotle and Plato are at one in their sense that the highest form of activity is not that of him who is striving to gain, but that of him who has gained what is most truly worth the gaining, and who now enjoys it. But the conception of eternity with which this sense most readily associates itself is due to Plato, though the curious may easily trace back its roots to Parmenides and Xenophanes. Plato's great conception of " ideas," or the world of unchanging realities that lies behind and gives all the significance it has to the world of changing semblances, implied that behind the temporal successions of time, which is the very medium of change and of semblance, there must be some other and larger mode of being in which is no succession. His follower Boethius describes eternity, in a phrase that became its classical definition in the schools, as " the complete and perfect possession of unlimited life all at once," and the Eternal as that which possesses by abiding what the things of time

only pursue by going. Now as to this eternal life, without progress because it has attained, Aquinas and Dante are at one. In this complete and soul-filling fruition there can be no flagging nor satiety, because he who looks upon God and sees him as he is can never cease to wonder, and where there is wonder how can there be stagnation? It is in this eternal life of all-at-onceness, not a thin succession of experiences, each of which draws its meaning from something it is coming to, but a grasping all together of the parts which as parts are imperfect, but which are a perfect whole, it is in this life of eternal fruition of the Divine Aspect, I say, that Dante and Aquinas alike find heaven.[1]

And they are alike in believing that there are different degrees of blessedness. Because no created being can realise God perfectly in the absolute sense, but each can realise him perfectly in the relative sense of finding in him the absolute fullness of his own being. In all this Dante and Aquinas are at one. But Dante has a poetic advantage in that he sees the souls not in consummate bliss, but in the intermediate state between the death and the resurrection of the body. According to the fixed belief of the Middle Ages "the soul without the body hath not the perfection of its nature," and, therefore, the souls, as

[1] Cf. my *Religion of Time and Religion of Eternity*. Essex Hall, 1899. Republished in *Studies in Theology*, Carpenter and Wicksteed, Dent, 1903.

Dante sees them, have not yet gained the perfection of consummate bliss. They are awaiting the resurrection of the body, when body and soul shall be united and the joys of the soul shall redound upon the body, and the consummation shall be. And therefore the souls in Dante's paradise are still in a state which is to some degree conceivable to us who are still *in via* (to use the scholastic phrase), "on the way," and not *in patria*, "at home." Consequently there is still room in Dante's *Paradiso* for a sense of something greater yet to come, and there is still concern for the successional life upon earth, and some sense of succession, and of progress that is yet to be. Thus Dante's *Paradiso*, while perpetually giving us the sense of eternity, still speaks in the language of time and progress which is native to us on earth.

And, lastly, there is one point of difference in which, if I am not pressing Dante's expressions too hard, he is content to leave us in the presence of an unharmonised logical and physical contradiction in obedience to the dictates of his spiritual insight. He tells us repeatedly that the Empyrean, the actual abode of God, of the angels, and of the blessed spirits, is not in space. That is to say, in the Empyrean the absolute life of consummation not only is not temporal, but is not spatial either. But how are we to reconcile this with the resurrection of the body in which Dante also believed? We cannot reconcile it. To say that the resurrec-

tion of the material body will finally liberate the immaterial soul from the bonds of space and time is indeed an audacious paradox. Yet Dante seems to say it. For he believed that the soul yearns for the body and cannot be perfected without it, and he knew that heaven "hath no poles,"[1] for it is not a place. Aquinas faces no such paradox. He declares, as logic imperatively demands, that heaven too is spatial. Although the glorified bodies are endowed with qualities which we should call miraculous on earth, and none of the limitations of space and time that we are accustomed to think of hold, yet in the last resort the life of the spirits is spatial and heaven is a place. To Dante, if I understand him rightly, space is objective to us in our earthly state, but it is subjective to God, existing only as his thought. Space itself nestles in the light and love of God which embrace it, but not spatially, for it exists only in him, and he is spaceless spirit.[2] So those who see God, even though they see in the body, will be emancipated not only from time, but from space itself; inasmuch as they will know it for a divine conception which they share, not an objective condition which circumscribes them.

[1] *Paradiso*, xiv. 61-63; xxii. 67.
[2] *Paradiso*, xxvii. 109-114; cf. xxix. 10-12.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IX

Note to pp. 252 *sq.*

On the possible salvation of one born in barbarous countries: "Unde dicitur, quod si aliquis in barbaris natus nationibus, quod in se est faciat, Deus sibi revelabit illud quod est necessarium ad salutem, vel inspirando, vel doctorem mittendo."—*In Sent.* II. *Dist.* XXVIII. qu. i. art. 4, ad quartum.

On the state of unbaptised infants: after citing some opinions which he does not think probable Aquinas goes on: "Et ideo alii dicunt, quod cognitionem perfectam habebunt eorum quae naturali cognitioni subjacent, et vita eterna [in the sense of the *divina visio*, or beatific vision of God] se privatos esse cognoscent, et causam quare ab ea exclusi sunt; nec tamen ex hoc aliquo modo affligentur: quod qualiter esse possit videndum est. Sciendum ergo, quod ex hoc quod caret aliquis eo quod suam proportionem excedit, non affligitur, si sit rectae rationis; sed tantum ex hoc quod caret eo ad quod aliquo modo proportionatus fuit: sicut nullus sapiens homo affligitur de hoc quod non potest volare sicut avis vel quia non est Rex vel Imperator, cum sibi non sit debitum: affligeretur autem, si privaretur eo ad quod habendum aliquo modo aptitudinem habuit."—*In Sent.* II. *Dist.* XXXIII. qu. ii. art. 2, solutio.

The passage from S. Bernard occurs in *Epistola* lxxvii. *ad Hugonem de S. Victore*, given in the

Benedictine Edition, Paris, 1719, as *Opusculum* x. *De Baptismo*, etc. In cap. 2, Bernard declares that if at any time after the general proclamation of baptism as the necessary condition of salvation a grown man should refuse it he would be most justly damned; but even in that case "si ante exitum resipuerit, et voluerit, et petierit baptisari, sed mortis præoccupatus articulo forte obtinere nequiverit; dum non desit fides recta, spes pia, caritas sincera; propitius sit mihi Deus, quia huic ego ob solam aquam, si defuerit, nequaquam omnino possum desperare salutem, nec vacuam credere fidem, nec confundere spem, nec excidere caritatem: tantum si aquam non contemptus, sed sola (ut dixi) prohibeat impossibilitas." As to children he is still more cautious. "Sane parvulis et necdum ratione utentibus, quia sola nocere creditur peccati contagio, non etiam mandati prævaricatio; tamdiu credendum est antiqua valuisse sacramenta, quamdiu palam interdicta non fuisse constiterit. An vero ultra? penes Deum est, non meum diffinire."

As to locality in heaven it is unfortunate that we have not the matured judgment of Aquinas. There appears to be some crudity and even inconsistency in his treatment of the subject in the "Sentences." In IV. *Dist.* XLIV. qu. ii. art. 3, discusses *utrum corpora gloriosa sint futura agilia*, and the fifth objection runs: "Unumquodque corpus gloriosum habebit . . . locum sibi convenientem secundum mensuram suae dignitatis. Sed locus conveniens est de pertinentibus ad gloriam. Cum ergo post resurrectionem gloria sanctorum nunquam varietur neque in plus neque in minus, quia tunc

erunt omnino in termino; videtur quod corpora eorum nunquam de loco sibi determinato recedent, et ita non movebuntur." The answer (sol. 2, ad quintum) is a good illustration of the Angelic Doctor's spatial conception of the life *in patria*, and incidentally it has an interest in connection with the machinery of Dante's *Paradiso* (compare iv. 28-39; and *supra*, pp. 263 *sq.*). It runs as follows: "Locus congrue unicuique corpori glorioso deputatus secundum gradum suae dignitatis pertinet ad praemium accidentale; non tamen oportet quod diminuatur aliquid de praemio, quantumcunque sit extra locum illum: quia locus ille non pertinet ad praemium secundum quod actu continet corpus locatum, cum nihil influat in gloriosum corpus sed magis recipiat splendorem ab eo; sed secundum quod est debitus pro meritis: unde gaudium de tali loco manet etiam ei qui est extra locum illum."

POSTSCRIPT TO CHAPTER VI

The analogy of S. Thomas's conception of the free will of God throws considerable light on his doctrine of the nature and limitations of the free will of man. God, by the necessity of his nature, wills his own goodness, but since his goodness is in no way dependent upon creation, and is not increased by it, he does not create by the necessity of his being, but of his own free will. "Ex his autem quae supra ostensa sunt, sequitur quod Deus de necessitate velit suum esse et suam bonitatem, nec possit contrarium velle."—*Contra Gentiles*, I. 80. "Voluntas autem non ex necessitate fertur in ea quae sunt ad finem, si finis sine his esse possit; non enim habet necesse medicus, ex suppositione voluntatis quam habet de sanando, illa medicamenta adhibere infirmo sine quibus potest nihilominus infirmum sanare. Cum igitur divina bonitas sine aliis esse possit, quinimmo nec per alia ei aliquid accrescat, nulla inest ei necessitas ut alia velit, ex hoc quod vult suam bonitatem."—*Ibid.* cap. 81. "Item, Secundum Philosophum (*Ethic*, 3, c. 7), voluntas est finis, electio autem eorum quae ad finem sunt. Cum igitur Deus seipsum tanquam finem velit et non sicut ea quae ad finem sunt, alia vero sicut ea quae ad finem sunt, sequitur quod respectu sui, habeat voluntatem tantum, respectu autem aliorum, electionem. Electio autem semper per liberum arbitrium fit. Deo igitur est liberum arbitrium."—*Ibid.* cap. 88.

But we are not to think of the divine will, when not determined by the divine nature, as acting independently of reasons or intelligible considerations. God acts "per suam sapientiam." And we read: "Comparantur ergo omnes res creatae ad Deum sicut artificiata ad artificem. Sed artifex, per ordinem suae sapientiae et intellectus, artificiata in esse producit. Ergo et Deus omnes creaturas per ordinem sui intellectus fecit. . . . Per hoc autem excluditur quorundam error, qui dicebant omnia ex simplici divina voluntate dependere, absque aliqua ratione."—*Ibid.* ii. 24. Some of the "rationes" of creation are given in i. 86, where we learn: "Aliquando igitur ratio divinae voluntatis continet solum decentiam, aliquando utilitatem, aliquando autem necessitatem quae est ex suppositione; necessitatem autem absolutam, solum cum vult seipsum." As an illustration of "decentia" or "convenientia" we find: "Unde non vult [Deus] alicui suam bonitatem communicare, ad hoc ut sibi exinde aliquid accrescat, sed quia Ipsum communicare, est sibi conveniens sicut fonti bonitatis. Dare autem, non propter aliquod commodum ex datione expectatum, sed propter ipsam bonitatem et convenientiam dationis, est actus liberalitatis, ut patet per Philosophum (*Ethic*, 4, c. 6). Deus igitur est maxime liberalis, et, ut Avicenna dicit (l. 2, c. 28 et 29), *Ipse solus liberalis proprie dici potest;* nam omne aliud agens praeter Ipsum ex sua actione aliquod bonum appetit vel acquirit, quod est finis intentus."—I. 93. Compare *Paradiso*, xxix. 13-15.

When, however, we consider the fundamental doctrine that all God's attributes or qualities are

himself; and that the distinctions we draw are only due to our incapacity for conceiving his unity except as plurality (Cf. *Sum. Theol.* I. qu. iii. art. 6; qu. xiii. art. 5, and many other passages), it will appear that when Aquinas has completed his analysis the *liberum arbitrium* of the deity has disappeared as completely as that of his creature. Indeed the intrinsic indeterminateness of human nature, as already explained (pp. 193 *sqq.*), gives the term more semblance of reality in the latter than in the former case; save that self-determination, even when necessary, may be thought of as more free than extrinsic determination.

I may take this opportunity of giving a rather more striking instance of the mention of remorse in hell than the one given on p. 212: "Unde vermis qui in damnatis ponitur, non debet intelligi esse materialis, sed spiritualis, qui est conscientiae remorsus: qui dicitur vermis, inquantum oritur ex putredine peccati, et animam affligit, sicut corporalis vermis ex putredine ortus affligit pungendo. —*In Sent.* IV. *Dist.* L. qu. ii. art. 3, sol. 2.

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